

Bursledon Windmill



Teachers Notes
Information and Resources

Introduction

Bursledon Windmill is an outstanding restoration of a working mill that exploits the free energy of the wind to produce stoneground flour.

It is unique in being the only complete windmill left in Hampshire. Most of the 30 or so at work in the early 19th century have completely disappeared, although a couple of towers survive as house conversions. It is also one of only 27 windmills in Britain that work regularly, wind permitting.

Bursledon is a 5-storey brick tower mill, which was used to convert different kinds of grain into flour and animal feed. Built near the site of an earlier post mill (1766) in 1813-14, some of the older wooden machinery was incorporated into the new mill. Mrs Phoebe Langtry was responsible for its construction. It cost approximately £800, and her son William was the miller for many years.

Built at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, it was never modernised. It was common for mills to be fitted with “spring” or “patent” sails or a fantail later, which makes Bursledon a rare example of a working tower mill today. The mill flourished during the ‘golden years’ of English agricultural prosperity in the mid 19th century, processing wheat from the surrounding areas into flour for local bakers, ships biscuits, and household use. The mill also produced animal feed from locally grown oats and barley.

Commercial use of the mill ceased in the mid 1880s. Like many other windmills, it was made redundant by major changes in flour milling technology. This coincided with a prolonged depression in agriculture, which began in the late 1870’s. Bursledon was an early casualty of the period, because the owner decided not to afford the major repairs that were required to keep the mill running.

The last miller was George Gosling, who bought the mill in 1872 and set up as a threshing contractor. His decision to replace the cap with a flat roof preserved the internal machinery long after the stocks and sails had been removed.

The windmill was used as a store for many years, until in the mid 1970s its significance as a historic monument was recognised. Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust bought the windmill, and spent the next 15 years restoring it to working order.

The windmill has been managed by Hampshire County Council Museums Service since 1991, and is kept fully operational. Working the mill is the best way to maintain and preserve it. The windmill is brought to life by using locally grown wheat to produce stoneground flour for sale to visitors and specialist bakers.

Resources available

Nursery/Reception Windmill Tour

Key Stage 1 Art & Design Unit 2C: Can buildings speak?

Exploring Bursledon Windmill using digital photographs.

Key Stage 3 Art & Design Unit 7B: What's in a building?

Using the windmill and its surrounding buildings as the stimulus for the development of 3D artwork using clay or paper.

Key Stage 3 Citizenship Unit 8: Leisure and sport in the local community.

Using the windmill as an example of a facility provided by the local council authority.

Key Stage 3 Windmill Tour