

Firing London's Imagination Annual Report 2023/2024



A project partnership between

THE FRIENDS
OF HIGHGATE
ROMAN KILN



Haringey
LONDON



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Summary

‘Our ambition is to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to explore, engage with and enjoy every aspect of the Roman kiln's story both in Highgate Wood and beyond’

Friends of Highgate Roman Kiln

This report highlights the outcomes of the Firing London’s Imagination: An inclusive approach to the Highgate Roman pottery heritage project in its first year, 2023/2024. Firing London’s Imagination project runs from May 2023 to May 2026. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it aims to conserve the 2nd Century CE Romano-British kiln first discovered in 1968 and display it in a newly refurbished visitor centre in Highgate Wood as a focus for community engagement and learning about the rich Roman heritage of the city.



History of the project

In the 1960s, archaeologists working in Highgate Wood found evidence of Roman activity. They eventually discovered ten kilns which had been built there between 50CE and 160CE – almost two thousand years ago.

These kilns were used by the Romans to make pottery for use in people's homes, such as beakers and bowls. Much of the pottery discovered had a distinctive dark-grey appearance, and became known as Highgate Ware.

One of the kilns was so well preserved that it was lifted out of the ground in 1968. It was first exhibited at the Horniman Museum then Bruce Castle Museum, Haringey until 1997, when most of it was placed in pieces in store.



Photo of excavation at Highgate Wood in 1968.

Conservation and redisplay of the kiln



Photo of the kiln sections in the conservation studio.



Photo of temporary Roman kiln exhibition.

The Roman kiln was previously stored in Bruce Castle Museum in disassembled sections since the 1990's. In early February 2024, the sections of the kiln were removed for conservation by the specialists in clay and traditional building materials of the Natural Building Centre in Conwy, North Wales.

The fully conserved kiln was returned to Highgate Wood in late August 2024 and was put on display, complete with interim interpretation, within the Woods' information hut, while designs for a new visitor centre are developed.

Construction of replica Roman kiln in Highgate Wood

A replica of the Roman Kiln was constructed by Graham Taylor from Potted History, with the help from volunteers from FoHRK and Turning Earth ceramic studio, Highgate.

This kiln was first fired at Highgate Wood Community Heritage Day on 1st September 2024. A second firing also took place in collaboration with Turning Earth on the 21st September 2024.



Photo of replica Roman Kiln in Highgate Wood.

Learning programme

905

school aged pupils have
taken part in our learning
programme during
academic year of
2023/2024

Four

KS1 - lower KS2 Roman
Woodland adventure
sessions delivered in
Highgate Wood.

12

A-level students
engaged in a five day,
structured STEAM
work experience.

30

KS2 hands-on
archaeology and clay
sessions delivered in
local schools.



Feedback from our learning programmes

‘I enjoyed the variety of subjects and tasks within the week - locating kiln and making pots.’

Student feedback from STEAM work experience

All the different activities were pitched just right - the map reading, the quercus identification, checking for squirrels and birds - these were things many of my class were not used to doing, so it was a real adventure for them.

Teacher feedback from KS1-lower KS2 Woodland Adventure session

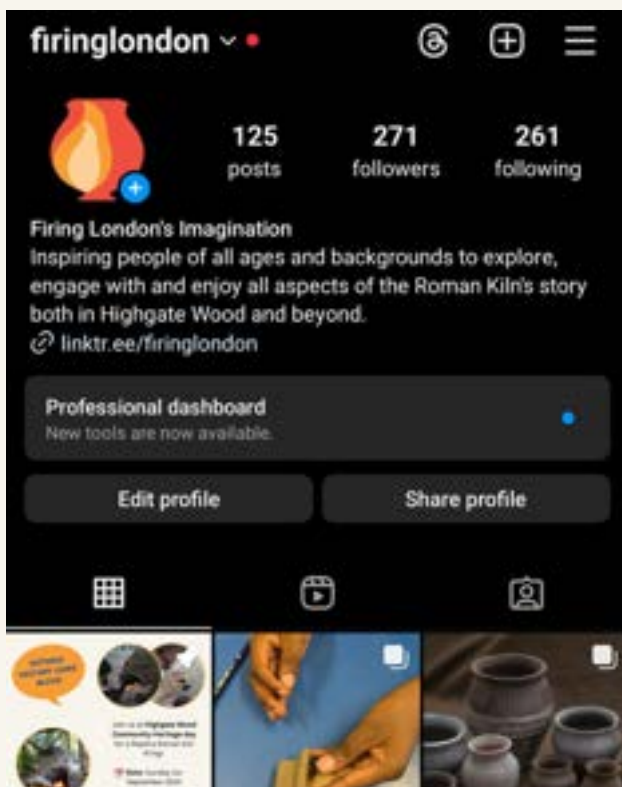


Word cloud from teacher feedback of KS2 workshop, including words such as fantastic, engaging, and enjoyed.

Social media and promotion

Firing London's Imagination social media platforms were launched in October 2023. We are active on both Instagram and Twitter. Both platforms are growing, with increasing numbers of active followers engaging with our content.

Our social media platforms provide followers with an insight into the project's history, the journey of reinstating the 2nd century CE Romano-British kiln in Highgate Wood and showcase work done in our learning programmes and outreach events.



Screenshot from
@firinglondon Instagram page.

3,800
accounts reached on
Instagram since October
2023

2,800
accounts reached in
September 2024 during the
kiln's return and the replica
Roman kiln construction at
Highgate Wood.

Future plans

During 2025 and 2026, Firing London's Imagination will:

Develop and implement our plans for the next phase of the project, to deliver a improved visitor centre and exhibition in Highgate Wood.

Continue to engage schools and communities across London with this unique piece of our shared heritage and the rich history of the city.

Scan the QR code to follow our progress.



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