

Hundreds enjoy annual Fire and Ice Festival, that brings winter fun to Alton Mill

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

The annual Fire and Ice Festival at the Alton Mill certainly lives up to its name. There was plenty of both on a snowy, blustery Saturday.

The January 16 snowfall just added to the atmosphere as visitors played hockey, took in the ice sculptures, watched the blacksmith in action, and slid down a toboggan slide.

When the sun went down the bonfire was fired up and everyone gathered to see which shape it would take this year.

There was plenty of indoor activities as well with artists and musicians in the gallery along with some presentations.

It was a good turnout of people who took advantage of the wintery day. Many people arrived from out of town to enjoy a small-town winter event.

"This our eleventh year," explained organizer Jordan Grant, who along with his family owns the mill. "It goes back to when we finished the reconstruction and the second phase here. This is the Fire and Ice festival and part of the festival is the Mill Pond Hockey Classic. Our blacksmith came all the way from Owen Sound. Most of our ice carvers are local. They are some of the people who work in wood, then work in ice during the winter. The event goes all day and into the evening as well. We have what we call the fire sculpture. It's more than just a bonfire. It sort of unveils itself as it burns. It's different every year."

This year the Hockey Classic had to move on to solid ground in front of the Mill. The recent mild weather meant the pond didn't freeze over enough this year to make skating safe.

That didn't stop the hockey game from getting underway and players enjoyed shooting the puck on the outdoor rink.

The annual event draws visitors to the town from many other towns and cities in the region.