

# World Heritage news

Issue 23 - 2025

[www.derwentvalleymills.org](http://www.derwentvalleymills.org)



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### and looking to its potential for the future

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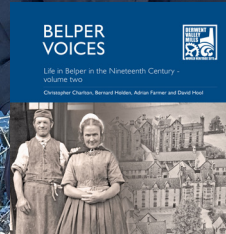
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**BELPER  
VOICES**

Life in Belper in the Nineteenth Century  
volume two

Christopher Chantler, Bernard Holmes, Arnold Farnley and David Hill

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**unesco**

Derwent Valley Mills  
Inscribed on the World  
Heritage List in 2001

## From the Chair

It's been a challenging year for the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site – but a fulfilling one as well.



In January, a 'Mission' from UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris brought three experts to the Derwent Valley to assess issues over planning decisions which they feel have impacted on our site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

In July we heard that the Mission had 15 recommendations to make, and when these were presented to the annual meeting of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, a further eight recommendations were added, covering a wide range of proposals designed to better protect and enhance the Derwent Valley Mills, their communities and the surrounding 'relict' landscape.

Trying to satisfy those recommendations will be time-consuming and sometimes difficult, but the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Partnership is committed to ensuring UNESCO will be satisfied that progress is being made to implement those recommendations or at least to establish appropriate results which show our commitment to the Site and its OUV.

One very satisfying result this year has been the official completion and unveiling of the final part of our wayfinding scheme for Belper, following last year's unveilings at Darley Abbey and Milford. At Belper, DVMWHS Strategic Board Vice-chair Ian Whitehead joined me in cutting the ribbon at the unveiling of Belper's 'World Heritage Wall', a huge mural map of Belper with text and pictures introducing its history to visitors, just outside the entrance to Belper Library.

I was also very pleased to help showcase the site on a tour along the valley for Claire Ward, the newly elected East Midlands Mayor, visiting some of the economic success stories, such as Darley Abbey Mills, and looking at potential opportunities for future restoration and investment, such as the Belper Mills.

### Barry Lewis

Chair, DVMWHS Partnership



# Showcasing Mills to East Midlands Mayor and MPs

**The new Mayor for the East Midlands Claire Ward has been exploring the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, finding out about the potential for the site as an economic driver in the region.**

With representatives of EMCCA (the East Midlands Combined County Authority), the Chair of the Derwent Valley Mills Partnership Councillor Barry Lewis and

the World Heritage Site coordination team, Claire's whistlestop tour of the 15-mile long site included the Darley Abbey Mills, Belper's new library and the town's mills complex, and Cromford Mills.

### New MPs

For the first time since the World Heritage Site was inscribed in 2001, each of the parliamentary constituencies which contain part of the Derwent Valley Mills elected new Members of Parliament in 2024.

To help those new MPs to better understand the complexities of a UNESCO site, and the opportunities for economic and cultural benefits it brings, a series of tours were held to showcase the historic mill sites, communities and landscapes.

From top: Mayor Claire Ward hears of plans to restore and put into use one of the key buildings at Cromford Mill; talking through the opportunities and issues with MPs Jonathan Davies (Mid Derbyshire), Catherine Atkinson (Derby North) and John Whitby (Derbyshire Dales).





## Seeking a replacement

**Work continues on securing a permanent replacement for the condemned bridge connecting Darley Abbey village to the mills.**

Although not the owner of the bridge, Derby City Council is taking the lead in securing a permanent replacement structure for the bridge, and provided a temporary footbridge as a short-term solution.

A key stakeholder workshop was held in

September, the information from which is being reviewed to make a robust case for a replacement bridge and the funding requirements.

Public engagement activities are planned for March/April 2025.

**TEMPORARY LINK:** The footbridge which Derby City Council provided to link the Darley Abbey Mills to the village, after the old bridge was condemned.



## Unlocking the Hydroelectric power of the Derwent Valley

World Heritage Site strategic board member Ian Jackson's PhD research at the University of Nottingham has been completed.

It confirms that the amount of locally produced renewable energy in the Derwent valley could be increased, by unlocking the remaining Hydroelectric Power potential from the historic watermill sites.

100 years ago over 40 industrial watermills and country houses in Derbyshire were self-generating hydroelectric power before the development of the coal-fired national electricity network.

Today, many of these historic sites, with weirs still in place, plus 20th century developments,

e.g. drinking water reservoirs and network, offer opportunities to store (water batteries) and generate hydroelectric power.

One interesting discovery was the role of millowners, often waterways rights owners, and their stewardship of the river. In developing the 1861 Salmon Fishery Act to try to halt a decline in salmon numbers (similar to today's decline), clauses were designed not to harm milling power, such as opening sluices or floodgates to redistribute fish in the rivers on a Sunday, when the mills weren't operating.

**SPREADING THE WORD:** Ian Jackson explains about water management at Belper on a guided tour.

## Reviewing and revising the Management Plan for 2026

All UNESCO World Heritage Sites require a Management Plan and the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Partnership is responsible for compiling the management plan for the site on behalf of His Majesty's Government (who are the State Party signed up to the World Heritage Convention).

Our current management plan covers 2020 to 2025 so we are currently reviewing our progress against the actions with our key partner organisations.

Despite this period being severely disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis and lots of changes for organisations and funding there has been so much positive work and progress.

Thanks go to the commitments of sites, organisations and volunteers pulling out all the stops to keep the Derwent Valley Mills a great place to live, work, visit and enjoy.

Throughout 2025 the coordination team will be working with partners to produce the 2026-31 Management Plan for submission to UNESCO. It's a complicated site, with lots of owners, visitors and important communities.

There is chance to get involved and have your say so follow our Meta social media [@DerwentValleyMillsWHS](#) and keep an eye on our website [www.derwentvalleymills.org.uk](http://www.derwentvalleymills.org.uk) for the latest updates.

## Alastair steps down

Earlier this year, after many years' service, Alastair Morley stepped down from his role as the Derwent Valley Line Community Rail Partnership. Alastair worked hard to establish a more frequent and better valued and promoted service through the World Heritage Site and will be much missed.

His replacement has now been announced and is Dave Clasby of Belper. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience from 20 years working at Sustrans, a walking, wheeling and cycling charity which is custodian of the National Cycle Network. He most recently worked as their Partnership Manager for the East Midlands.

## Public meeting kicks off plans for a key year

A public meeting was held in October to begin looking at how Belper and the Derwent Valley Mills WHS can commemorate significant anniversaries in 2026.

That year is the 250th anniversary of the first water powered cotton mill opening in the town, beginning its transformation into the world's first Cotton Mill Town. It will also see the 300th anniversary of the birth of Jedidiah Strutt, who built that first mill, had previously funded Richard Arkwright in his building of the world's first successful water powered cotton mill at Cromford, and had mills in Derby.

The Derwent Valley Mills will also be celebrating 25 years on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites in 2026.

There was a large turnout at the event, and a great deal of enthusiasm for appropriate activities to mark the occasion. Events which look likely to go ahead are:

- A donkey parade, reviving the old Belper Donkey Races, but with a 21st century slant, using 'hobby donkeys', and possibly pantomime donkeys, in a parade on King Street.
- A horticultural show – celebrating the Strutt's development of allotments for their workers, and provision of large gardens to encourage them to grow their own food.
- Talks and exhibitions through the year, covering a number of topics including Strutt's links to cotton purchased from plantations where the workforce were enslaved.
- A celebratory gathering to show what Belper people have and still do achieve, including songs about the town.

Plus concerts, church services, a community history day, a bicycle parade, and numerous other activities still being explored. A steering group has been formed to look at progressing the events as a single festival across the whole of 2026, and securing funding. More announcements will be made in 2025.

# New life for 'Komet' at John Smedley

**'Komets' were designed and built in the East Midlands between the 1920s and the 1970s and were widely used to knit socks and stockings.**

However, due to the collapse of the hosiery industry from the 1980's, these significant machines are now very rare.

John Smedley's 'Komet' had been left unused in a corner of the factory and, during building works, it (like so many others), was seen as redundant and scrapped. Fortunately, spotted in the skip, it was hauled out and stored, whilst funds were sought to restore it. The Association of Industrial Archaeology (AIA) recognised the importance of the machine and awarded the John Smedley Archive Charitable Trust a grant.

The skilled engineering work has been undertaken by Belper-based

Ian Farrell, who immediately realised that much of the machine was missing. Luck was on the side of the project because by chance, a similar model was discovered amongst a job-lot of Welsh weaving machinery being sold on Ebay! This second Komet, although damaged, was purchased for sacrificial parts. In the meantime, desk-based research proved that the Smedley machine had been adapted 50 years ago, to knit circular fabric. The team decided to restore the Smedley machine to its adapted condition and the Ebay 'find', which had most of its original elements, to 'sock knitting state'.

Ian is now approaching the final stages of bringing both machines back to working condition –



**AIA** The Association for Industrial Archaeology  
Promoting the study, preservation and presentation of industrial heritage

without 'over-restoring' them. Paintwork has been cleaned, not re-painted, cogs and carriers straightened, not re-made. Recently joined by a volunteer, Ian hopes that socks will be produced by early 2025.

**RESTORATION:** Ian with the 'Komet' he has lovingly returned to working order.

# Water generating power for Cromford Mills again

The Arkwright Society's waterpower project at Cromford Mills highlights its commitment to sustainability, using historic waterpower to generate renewable energy.

This initiative reduces the site's carbon footprint and enhances the Society's mission to educate the public on renewable energy's role in a greener future.

With funding from organisations including Severn Trent Community Fund and the Green Entrepreneurs Fund, the project installed a 1957 Gilkes hydro turbine, a six-metre waterwheel, and a closed-loop control system.

Currently, 20-25% of Cromford's electricity is generated by water, lowering costs and advancing their Net Zero goals. Interpretive boards link Cromford's industrial heritage



with modern sustainability efforts, educating visitors on renewable energy. STEM workshops and Eco days bring hands-on sustainability lessons to life.

Cromford Mills aims to bring these concepts to an ever-wider audience through informal

learning and on site interpretation, positioning itself as a model for integrating renewable energy in heritage sites, blending history with progress.

**WHEELY GREAT:** The new zinc wheel in the pit of Arkwright's Second Mill.

# Mills option work is completed

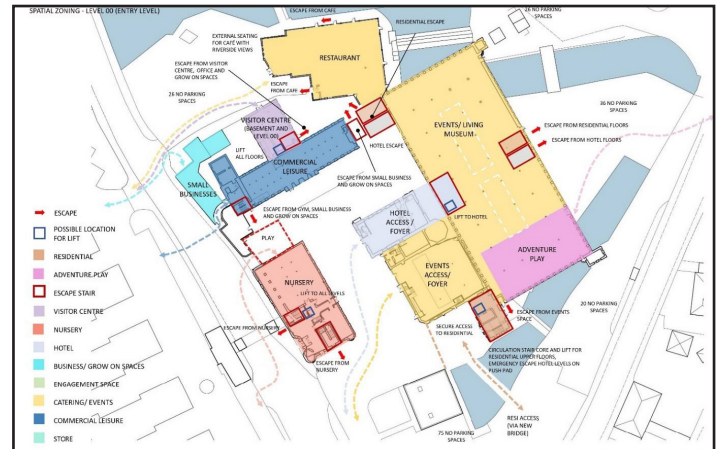
The DVMWHS Partnership project to look at alternative viable options for the Belper Mills complex has been completed.

The work was led by Amion Consulting who worked in partnership with Mosedale Gillatt Architects and Aspinall Verdi Property Development Consultants to consider different uses for the site and also taking into account the feedback from the public consultation.

There was a shortlist of three scenarios that were judged the most appropriate and financially viable: residential, multi-generational living/working scheme, and mixed use/commercial option.

All of the scenarios included a potential space for a visitor centre or museum. The findings of the detailed work undertaken by the consultants was that taking into account the construction costs and the development value, none of the scenarios were financially viable in their own right, each having a significant conservation deficit (where the cost for conserving and repurposing a structure or building is greater than its market value once the works are completed).

This shows that the most likely way to progress any development for Belper Mills will be by a public/private partnership. More information about the report and key findings can be found at [www.derwentvalleymills.org/belper-mills-future/](http://www.derwentvalleymills.org/belper-mills-future/).



[derwentvalleymills.org/belper-mills-future/](http://www.derwentvalleymills.org/belper-mills-future/).

The Partnership is committed to finding a viable, sustainable and appropriate solution to this

important central hub of the World Heritage Site.

FOR CONSIDERATION: One of the scenarios put forward in the report.

# Masson Mills continuing to attract more visitors

A year ago, we reported on a flurry of activity at Masson Mills with the reopening of the meeting and conference spaces, museum and car park together with the addition of a coffee shop/visitor centre.

There has been growth in the use of all of these over the last twelve months and the owners have enjoyed a sense of the community welcoming the ability to visit this wonderful place again.

They look forward to more and more individuals and organisations visiting through the coming year.

New developments at Masson in 2024 have included the installation of EV chargers in the car park on level two, allowing drivers to 'fill up' with clean electricity from the River Derwent.

They have also been tidying up the grounds, attending to the chimney, and working more behind the scenes on improving renewable energy output and on ideas for

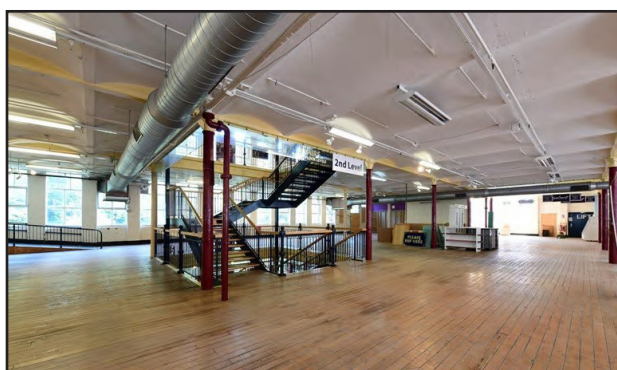


future uses for the vacant parts of the Mills.

As part of that work the former shopping centre has recently been advertised to let through a property agent (Brasier Freeth).

**DOUBLING UP:** Original Masson machinery in the museum's doubling room (above).

**TO LET:** Inside the former shopping centre (below).



## Cromford Mills' new exhibition comes to life

Historic objects, originally on display at Belper North Mill Museum, have a new home at Cromford Mills visitor centre. Volunteers, staff and university students worked together on a project led by Dr Sophie Campbell using cotton machinery to curate social history stories about the mill workers, enslaved cotton labourers and the global impact of expansion of cotton spinning that started in the Derwent Valley. New interpretation brings the story of the machines to life and the award winning Global Cotton Workers mural by Brian Gallagher has been revealed for greater impact. Explore for yourself at Cromford Mills before joining a tour to find out more.

## Workshops repair work completed

Works to repair the roof, chimney, pointing, guttering and internal decorating of the High Peak Junction workshops was completed at the end of 2023. The signal post was painted in the spring, completing all the decorating works.

A busy summer followed, with visitors commenting on how good the workshops are looking.

The 2024 Forge and Blacksmith Days have proved very popular, all fully booked up, with people keen to see and use the old workshop forge. In 2025, the first Blacksmith Introduction day is on 15 February and Forge Day is on 22 February. Booking is required for these events on 01629 533298. An Elves Workshop, building birdboxes, is on 21 December, and can be booked on the same number.

## Trading heritage

In September, a weekend of activities celebrated the history and heritage of Belper's shops and traders.

It was the arrival of the Strutt mills in Belper which brought sufficient prosperity to enable traders to set up in the town. To celebrate nearly two centuries of diverse trade, a large exhibition was created, part funded by Belper Town Council, and shown at the No.28 centre in the Market Place.

Numerous artefacts relating to past shops and businesses were also on display, and there were a number of stands for people to find out more.

On the first day, talks were given every half-hour through the day on different aspects of trade in the town, and a new book about Belper Market Place in the 19th Century was launched.

The exhibition boards have now moved to Belper's St John's Chapel where they will be displayed in 2025, and made available to the town's schools as educational aids.

# Setting a new course

**The Belper North Mill Trustees and Volunteers have been working closely to set a new course, in the second year since the North Mill museum closed in 2022, supported by the local councils, the DVMWHS coordination team, local people and partners.**

A new strategy has been developed, looking towards a future that will, one day, see a heritage centre return to Belper, but also ensuring the trustees and volunteers play their part in preserving and promoting Belper's heritage.

Chair of the Belper North Mill Trust Ian Hill said: "By working together, we have achieved a great deal this year. We have:

- Set out a new programme of Heritage Walks and Mill Site Tours.
- Gone out into the community telling Belper's stories to Community Groups, including Women's Institutes, Dementia Groups and more.
- Reached out to schools – recently visiting Derby's Royal School for the Deaf.
- Put on family events in the River Gardens where over 100 people attended.
- Increased the number of visitors, whose support we couldn't do without. Their positive reviews have seen us receive the Trip Advisor Travellers Choice award 2 years running.
- Recruited some new volunteers and the

professionalism of our volunteers has seen us make the Visit Peak District and Derbyshire awards final in the 'Team of The Year' category.

- A new partnership agreement with The Arkwright Society, that is helping both organisations.
- We welcomed back our excellent volunteer coordinator Victoria, who is a key part of our team.
- Ended our year on a high with a visit from the US-based Rhode Island Historical Society. Some 40 guests were guided round by our volunteers. It was a great day for us and the town.

"Looking forward we still have work to do –

- Our last Heritage Walk of 2024 on Boxing Day at 11am from Belper Triangle – on Belper and The Beasts! Join Christine to follow the old Circus Parade Route and discover some Fantastic Beasts on the way. Book on our website.
- We aim to return to Belper the machine that made Jedidiah Strutt's first fortune and a portrait of his son William, architect of The North Mill. Hopefully these will go on display in Belper Library early in 2025.
- We are working with Our Belper Mills to help bring together all Belper's Heritage Groups to help with the planning for 2026, the 250th Anniversary of the first Strutt Mill being built in Belper."

For more information about the strategy, tours, talks, walks and volunteering visit [www.belpernorthmill.org.uk](http://www.belpernorthmill.org.uk).

## Antiques Roadshow at Cromford



Back in May 2024 the fantastic team from the BBC's Antiques Roadshow came to Cromford Mills with their leading antiques and fine arts specialists.

A very rainy day did not dampen the spirits of hundreds of visitors who brought along family heirlooms, household treasures and car boot bargains for inspection.

In all three episodes were filmed for broadcast which included presenter Fiona Bruce exploring the

Cromford Canal, viewing Birdswood the trip boat, pretending to be on a carriage (with no horses!) and exploring special artefacts from the Arkwright Society archive.

A really great showcase of the Derwent Valley Mills, Cromford Mills and the rich heritage of the area and some excellent items. Catch up on BBC iPlayer.

**WET BUT BUSY:** The mill yard was full of visitors with their treasures to show the experts.



## Schools explore World Heritage landscapes in Bloom workshops

**In June the DVMWHS coordination team worked with four schools to support Belper in Bloom.**

125 young people from Years 2 to 4 took part in the workshops and a further 176 took part in a special Belper in Bloom assembly.

They learned about the special 'relict' landscape of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, the historical parks and gardens, farming and

allotments and the garland displays that used to take place in the town. They discovered that Belper has a blooming past and continues to bloom today!

They used cotton fabric, like that made from the thread spun at the Mills, leaves from the landscape and the Japanese technique of Hapa Zome to make beautiful natural bunting. They also used fabric pens to create designs showcasing the special landscape, mills and growing that takes place in and

around Belper. Some also learned braiding techniques to thread the bunting onto.

A huge thanks to the pupils from Herbert Strutt Primary, Milford Primary, St Johns CofE Primary and St Elizabeth's Catholic VA Primary and to the wider Belper in Bloom team who made the town look so magnificent and secured a gold award.

**BLOOMING LOVELY:** Some of the bunting created in the school workshops.

## Display on low carbon energy looks to past and to future



Derby Museums are working in partnership with Vaillant - a leading manufacturer of boilers, heat pumps and heating systems - to build industry skills for the future.

This new partnership was launched in June with a new display at the Museum of Making showcasing innovations from Vaillant and its sister

brand Glow-worm, looking at heritage boilers from the past and heat pump technology for a low carbon future.

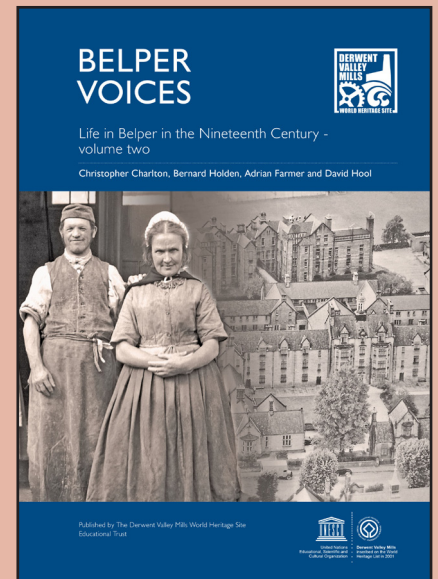
These were joined by a variety of related industrial artefacts, including a piece of the Belper West Mill waterwheel on loan from Belper Historical Society. Vaillant's UK headquarters are based in Belper.



Derby Museums will be working with Vaillant on new educational programmes to inspire apprentices, engineers and makers of the future.

**ON DISPLAY:** The new exhibition (left).

**SURVIVING PIECE:** The segment of the West Mill water wheel.



## More Belper Voices in print

The DVMWHS Education Trust has been very busy over the last twelve months and produced Belper Voices - Life in Belper in the Nineteenth Century - Volume Two. This volume covers the Pym family, how the Belper Workhouse came into being and information about the Belper Guardians. The book priced £18 is on sale in local bookshops and also from the Education Trust website.

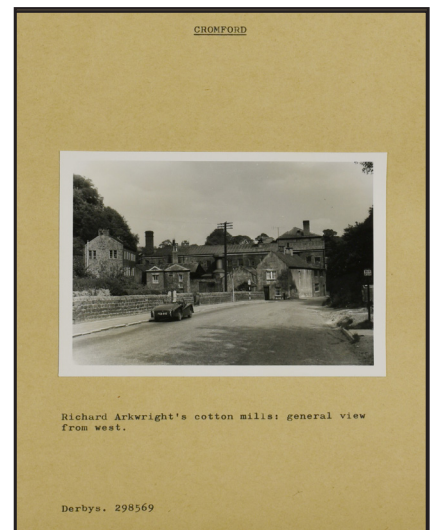
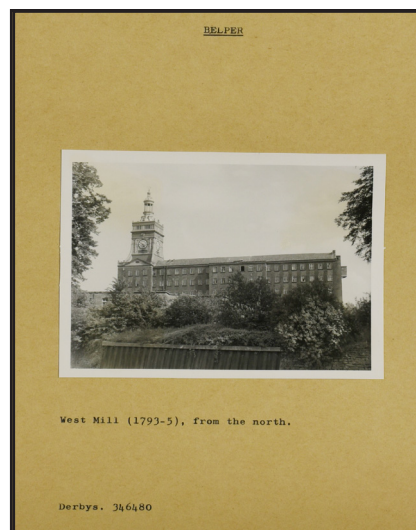
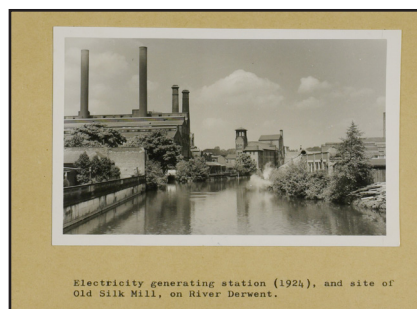
## Derbyshire Days Out discounts

A number of visitor attractions in Derbyshire are part of a group working together to promote their offer to visitors with a discount available if more than one is visited.

A leaflet showcases the attractions and the discounts offered and these are specific to the attraction and range from reduced admission ticket prices, reduction on guided tours or drinks.

Please check attractions' individual websites for the most up to date information.

# New visuals of mills are secured for Derbyshire



**A collection of photographs has been acquired by the Derbyshire Record Office, providing new visual material on the mills in the Derwent Valley 60 years ago.**

Earlier this year, Hugh Potter, archivist to the Friends of Cromford Canal, contacted the World Heritage Site

coordination team to flag up an imminent auction of carded photographs from the 1960s, recording sites of industrial heritage interest across the county.

Derbyshire Record Office were able to put forward a bid for the photographs and were successful in securing them. In all, there are 97 photographs, with a significant number

covering the Derwent Valley, especially Belper.

Of particular note were interior views of Belper's West Mill before it was demolished in 1962, of which no other photographic evidence is known.

**DERWENT VALLEY MILLS IN THE 1960s:** Examples of the carded photographs now in the Derbyshire Record Office.

## Researcher workshop

Following three very successful researcher workshops in the Derwent Valley in recent years, a fourth is planned for March 2025.

These free workshops provide an opportunity for researchers of all levels and interests to come together and hear how individual projects have progressed – and find out where research materials are available.

For 2025, the event will be held at Belper's Strutts Centre on Tuesday 25 March and is titled 'Threading Research Together'. There are 14 speakers planned for the day, as well as a small exhibition, a taster session about the Derwent Valley Mills Research Framework wiki pages and access to the Derbyshire Archaeological Society Library, which is at the Strutts Centre.

The diversity of topics covered in the 12 presentations reflects the scope of research carried out in the World Heritage Site, and the enthusiasm of so many people in the area, keen to find out more about the WHS and its story.

Places are limited, so to book a space on the workshop, email [dvmwhs@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:dvmwhs@derbyshire.gov.uk).

Please note that whilst this is a free event, attendees need to provide their own lunch.

## Further enhancements for DVMWHS research wiki

Work has continued in 2024 to update and enhance the interactive digital version of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Research Framework (<https://researchframeworks.org/dvmwhs/>).

This has included revision of the summary of Derbyshire archive collections containing documents, artefacts and other material with potential for elucidating the many research questions highlighted in the Research Framework, providing thereby a useful up to date summary of archival sources for researchers.

Further enhancements to the wiki are planned for 2025 and researchers are encouraged to use the 'comment' facility to suggest ways in which it might be improved, to highlight new research addressing questions in the Research Agenda, and to suggest new questions that should be taken on board in future revisions. Instructions on how to contribute to and comment on the wiki may be found by



### Derbyshire Archive Collections

Comprehensive list of museums and societies with archive material for the DVMWHS

[The Derbyshire Collections >](#)

clicking the following link: <https://researchframeworks.org/how-to-use-the-research-framework-site/#section-2>.

UPDATED: The summary of key Derbyshire archives is at <https://researchframeworks.org/dvmwhs/derbyshire-archives-collections/>



# Another successful year for FCC's Birdswood

The Friends of Cromford Canal's trip boat Birdswood ended its 2024 public cruises in November. Through the winter work will be undertaken to return her to operation for Easter 2025.

To operate Birdswood, certifications need to be maintained annually with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, for the boat and masters. The Friends group have invested in major spare parts for the boat's propulsion system, which are on standby so that public cruises can be maintained in case of failure of key parts.

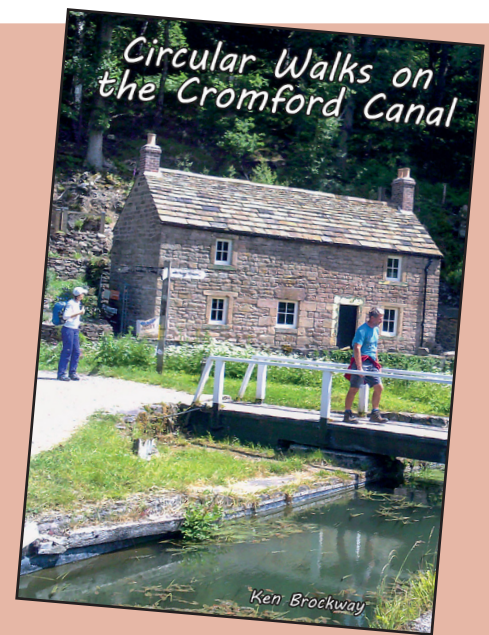
The Cromford Mills new hydro-scheme's automated level controls have given a consistent canal water level. Additionally, Friends of Cromford Canal funded spot dredging and weed removal with approval of Natural England and their work party assisted Derbyshire County Council with many tasks from reed clearance to

repainting canalside structures.

They also funded a detailed geo-technical survey from Aqueduct Cottage to Gregory Tunnel where there are known issues of bank instability. The consultant's report has been presented to Derbyshire County Council so that they can plan remedial works.

Merchandise sales account for over 25% of Friends of Cromford Canal Trading Operations revenue, thanks to three couples who manage and staff the Weighbridge Shop at Cromford, deliver wholesale sales, and fulfil online orders from our website.

It was a successful 2024 for the Friends charity, generating a significant surplus from trading activities, which is all fed back into canal maintenance and restoration. Birdswood starts her cruising season again at Easter 2025.



## New walks book

The Friends of Cromford Canal launched a new book at the beginning of 2024, entitled Circular Walks on the Cromford Canal. It features a dozen walks, half of which are in the World Heritage Site. It is available from local outlets and online from the FCC website.

# Cycling, walking, paddling along the Derwent valley

**The Derwent Valley Trust has a goal of providing sustainable access to the River Derwent and is currently engaged in progressing this work.**

Activities which appear slow-moving, because they inevitably have to follow long-drawn-out formal processes, include contributions to a feasibility study commissioned by Derbyshire County Council, for the Derwent Valley Cycleway; and an application for planning approval to construct a section of that cycleway along the Derwent, west of Belper.

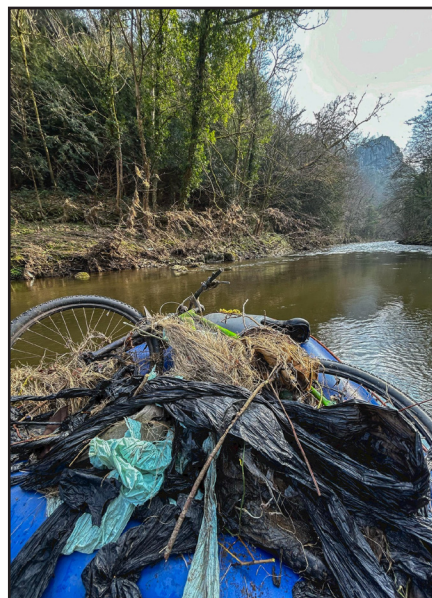
But actions have been taken which have had immediate, beneficial impact. Flood events keep happening across the British Isles, and when they hit the Derwent they sweep all manner of things from surrounding fields into the river, like hay bales and swathes of polythene wrap. This adds to litter and other rubbish sadly dropped by the public.

Local charity Paddle Peak have, several times over the past year, taken to the river to gather and dispose of the rubbish.

On one such occasion they collected almost a ton – alongside other notable catches included road cones, a highchair, a bicycle and even a trombone!

The Trust continues to support access for

active travel along the length of the river,



above all in the World Heritage Site. Visit the website at [www.derwentvalleytrust.org.uk](http://www.derwentvalleytrust.org.uk) and subscribe to their newsletter to keep up to date.

**CLEARING AWAY:** A loaded canoe on the river stretch near Artists' Corner.

## Roads research

Belper Clusters Heritage Group continues to work hard to seek funding to reinstate the heritage of the road system in the Clusters area.

Currently, members are researching the history of the roads and wider construction of the mill housing area. If anybody can provide time or information to help with this current endeavour, and support with funding bids, please contact Rachael Wayne at [rachael.irish77@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rachael.irish77@yahoo.co.uk).

## Watery weekend

As part of National Mills Weekend in May 2024 the Derwent Valley Mills took a watery theme! It started with a specialist talk from Derwent Hydro at Masson Mills highlighting how waterpower has been used on the site for centuries to the modern hydroelectric turbines powering the site today.

The weekend included opportunity to explore the newly installed hydro power and water wheel at Cromford Mills and was completed with a water-themed walk led by DVMWHS Heritage Coordinator Adrian Farmer.

The walk highlighted the importance of water to Cromford village, mills, landscape and transport. From the 'bear pit', housing and Greyhound in the village to the aqueducts and channels for the mills the walk also took in Cromford Canal, High Peak Junction, Leawood Pumphouse and finished at the wonderfully restored Aqueduct Cottage.



## Ever thought of becoming a volunteer?

Volunteers make such a difference across our World Heritage Site.

From supporting school visits, giving guided tours, leading walks, operating engines and forges, caring for artefacts, researching, planning events, being in the thick of it on conservation tasks, restoring old buildings and skipping boats there's so much the amazing volunteers do and there's always space for some more!

If you love the outdoors, heritage, have digital skills, want to learn something new, have fun and meet new people, have a look what's on offer at <https://www.derwentvalleymills.org/discover/volunteer/>.

In early 2025 we're offering our volunteers chance to join our minibus tours of the whole of the World Heritage Site to learn from each other, visit different sites and explore all the interlinking stories discovering what makes the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site of 'Outstanding Universal Value' to all humanity!

Although booked up we're hoping to offer more tours for volunteers later in the year.

Our volunteers will also be heavily involved in our 'Threading Research Together' DVMWHS Researcher Workshop in March.

A host of different speakers will talk about their reasons for researching in the valley, how they progressed and what they did with their research once it was completed (see page 8).



# Aqueduct Cottage recognised as an exemplar project

**The year got off to a great start for Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's Aqueduct Cottage when it earned a "Special Mention" at the prestigious RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Journal 2024 MacEwan Awards.**

The award recognised the cottage restoration project for its significant contribution to local architectural heritage and as an exemplar community engagement project.

It also celebrated the cottage's amazing transformation and the ongoing efforts to preserve the local cultural legacy, promoting nature conservation and providing a beautiful and engaging visitor attraction for the community's benefit.

The cottage has seen some important changes this year, thanks to the tireless work of its volunteers and generous support from local businesses and other supporting organisations. In a historic achievement, the project successfully sourced, restored, and installed a lock gate at the entrance to the Leewood Arm of the Cromford Canal.

The gate's installation, (the first in 200 years) is intended as a physical representation of the original "stop-gate", installed in 1802 by Peter

Nightingale. The stop-gate was key to enabling Nightingale to build the Leewood arm, and it's the reason Aqueduct cottage was built - to provide a home for the lock-keeper.

In addition to this milestone, Aqueduct Cottage has become a hub for regular art and photography exhibitions and craft courses, hosting 64 days of events from March to November.

An array of displays celebrating the diversity and beauty of local wildlife, landscapes and history have attracted up to two thousand visitors per month. The cottage also provides a unique platform for some of Derbyshire's talented artisans to showcase their work.

The Special Mention at the RIBA Journal MacEwan Awards not only celebrates the cottage's historical significance but also the passion and dedication of its volunteers, who continue to breathe new life into this picturesque location. With its joint focus on heritage and nature conservation and education, Aqueduct Cottage is poised to remain a cherished part of the local heritage for years to come.

**NEW ARRIVAL:** The lock gate is installed (below)

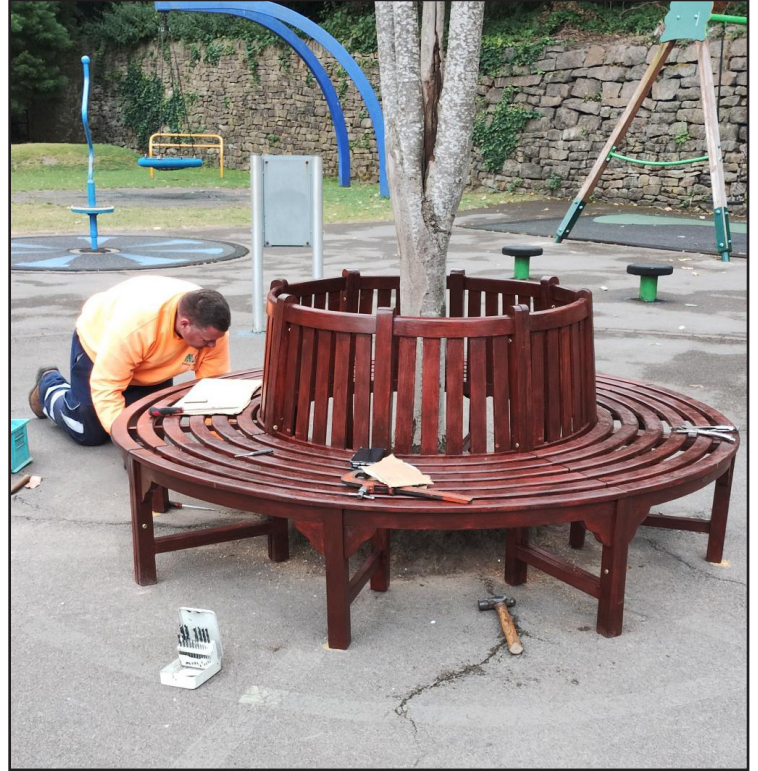




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## Don't miss out!

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of **World Heritage News** and found the contents interesting and helpful. It is no longer possible to print the newsletter, so only a digital version is available. To ensure you receive future digital editions, please email the WHS team at [dvmwhs@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:dvmwhs@derbyshire.gov.uk).



# Circular seat is a reminder of River Gardens' creator

## A circular seat has been installed in the play area of Belper's River Gardens.

The seat will be a reminder of the circular seat on George Herbert Strutt's Scottish Estate of Kingairloch that featured so much in family photographs.

George Herbert created the gardens in 1905/6, and it was felt this link will add interest to tours and for visitors as well as being a useful amenity.

Installed by Amber Valley Borough Council, which owns the gardens, it was paid for by Belper Community Enterprise using funds which were raised for building the new tearooms but when funding was found from elsewhere these were

diverted, at the wish of individual donors, to be spent in the Gardens.

Belper Community Enterprise have made an offer to the council to help fund other improvements to the Gardens, including the wheelchair accessible picnic table and features that add to the historic interest, using the balance of these funds.

**HISTORIC SEAT:**The original seat being used by George Herbert Strutt in July 1913 (above left).

**NEW ARRIVAL:**The River Gardens seat being installed (above right).

**STILL THERE:**The original seat survives at Kingairloch (right).



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Derwent Valley Mills  
Inscribed on the World  
Heritage List in 2001