



Welcome to the sixth Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site E-newsletter

January 2008

Since the fifth issue of this e-newsletter, the third successful Discovery Days weekend has taken place within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. Blessed again with good weather, the 60 events were well supported, ensuring there will be more Discovery Days in the future.

Conservation work and economic development continue to move forward in the valley, and a new education group has been launched to encourage greater use of the World Heritage Site as a learning resource.

I hope you will find these updates of interest.

Adrian Farmer

Co-ordinator, Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site

Discovery Days attract the crowds

FINE weather encouraged people to turn out for over 60 events which took place during the third Discovery Days weekend for the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. Events ranging from horse-drawn canal boats to guided tours and vintage bus rides to Shakespeare's take on the seven deadly sins, took place to help people better understand and enjoy the World Heritage Site which runs from Derby Silk Mill in the south to Masson Mills in Matlock Bath.

Free vintage bus tours took people up the valley from Derby's Silk Mill on Saturday and was full on both journeys. In the Silk Mill itself, the 1623 Company performed Sinful ShaXXXpeare to appreciative audiences.

In Belper, the highlight was a two-night celebration of water through light and music, co-ordinated by Belper-based Fleet Arts. Children's and adult workshops were held beforehand to create light boxes for a procession and a multi-media hour-long presentation which was projected on screens around the bandstand.

Dancing Daleks and Doctor Whos went down well in the River Gardens on Sunday morning, and Morris dancers in the Market Place also drew a crowd. Over 100 people turned out to see the final public opening of Herbert Strutt School before it's closure in February. Many of them also took the opportunity to see the Samuel Slater DVD produced last year by Maypole Productions.

Several walks and trails over the weekend took place around Belper and Milford, and it was a busy weekend for Strutt's North Mill and Heage Windmill. A celebration of prolific author Alison Uttley took place at the Unitarian Chapel, and at the Ritz Cinema Dr Andy Minion introduced special screenings of Women in Love, Ken Russell's 1969 film partly filmed in the Belper area.

Cromford Canal was again one of the busiest venues, with a horse-drawn narrow boat travelling between High Peak Junction and Cromford Wharf, and the Gothic Warehouse had displays by local artists, the Friends of Cromford Canal, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and the Arkwright Spinners. Outside, a children's workshop to make woven model boats proved popular and over 300 people watched traditional rope-making skills being displayed.

The 2008 Discovery days are expected to take place across the whole of the half-term school holidays, beginning on Saturday 25 October and ending on Sunday 2 November. More details will be available in the summer.

Development grant will improve canal

CROMFORD canal is set to get a makeover thanks to a grant from the East Midlands Development Agency (emda). The 5.5 mile canal, owned by Derbyshire County Council, runs through the World Heritage Site from Ambergate to Cromford and is used by thousands of people every year.

The council has secured a substantial award from EMDA designed to fund the improvement of waterways that in turn will encourage economic development. The award is for £417,500. In total £800,500 will be invested from a variety of sources which includes Network Rail, County Council funds and the Derwent Valley Line Community Rail Partnership.

The money will fund a three year project which will include:

- The renovation of the railway footbridge at Whatstandwell
- Engineering work including the design of new water controls and restoration of structural features.
- Environmental improvements to increase wildlife in the area.
- Improved access to the canal
- Improving buildings at High Peak Junction to provide more usable work space
- Renovating the boiler at Leawood Pump House and creating a video about the historic monument.

Economic Development work gets underway

SUKIE KHAIRA, the new Economic Development Programme Coordinator for the World Heritage Site, has begun working on an Action Plan to include a list of projects that can be delivered within the next two years. A number of projects are planned and some will need feasibility studies before they can progress – work will be taking place to develop these over the next few months.

In November the Belper North Mill Visitor Centre was successful in becoming one of two new franchise Tourist Information Centres in the region. The funding for the capital work is from East Midlands Tourism in partnership with Visit Peak District & Derbyshire. The refurbishment at the visitor centre will include a new touch screen kiosk, television, coffee area and furniture for visitors. There will also be a new computer for the staff at the centre. The work will be completed by the end of March 2008.

Signs planned to protect vulnerable footbridge

BRIDGE collision warning signs are to be installed at Bridge Foot in Belper, as part of Derbyshire County Council's Environmental Mitigation Measures capital schemes for 2007-08.

The signs will help protect the grade II* listed Georgian Footbridge – a structure vulnerable to high vehicle collision. The likelihood of collision has been heightened with the advent of satellite navigation (sat nav) systems which have been known to direct large vehicles along this road as it is the main route between Ashbourne and Belper. In recent years there have been a number of near misses and on the few occasions the bridge has been struck it has been fortunate that minimal damage has been caused.

The warning system will have sensors and signs either side of the footbridge that will be triggered if vehicles over a certain height pass along the road. At all other times the signs will not be illuminated which will hopefully help blend them into their background. The scheme designers have had to balance the need for the signs to be clearly visible to drivers of high vehicles with the visual sensitivities of the surrounding historic environment.

The warning signs are scheduled to be installed in early February.

New grant scheme takes off

A NEW Conservation Partnership scheme – supported by English Heritage, the County Council and the Borough Council – is offering grant aid towards historic building repair and restoration in Belper. Expressions of interest received for aid have been encouraging and the scheme is already over-subscribed for its first year.

The scheme again concentrates its resources on properties in the vicinity of Bridge Street and Chapel Street, Belper. A substantial offer of grant has been made towards restoration of one of the four

properties that combine to significantly contribute to the townscape character of this busy commercial hub near the bottom of King Street.

Although a similar publicity exercise is shortly to be undertaken for eligible properties in Cromford, supported by Derbyshire Dales District Council, a number of interesting projects have come forward including the possible reinstatement of cast iron windows to a row of Arkwright workers' houses.

With at least a further two years of the scheme to run it is expected that the momentum will be maintained in the light of the interest already shown.

Of the outstanding schemes from the previous Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme, the group of buildings in Swifts Yard, Cromford is well on their way to being repaired and converted to accommodate their new uses. The realisation of one of a number of key objectives to improve visitor access to the World Heritage Site is on its way to being achieved with the commencement of the Arkwright Society's Cromford Station Project with the eventual aim being to provide to create a visitor 'portal' in the north of the Site as well as securing the use of a building identified as being 'at risk'.

Funding for Woodland Surveying and other training

THANKS to funding provided through the Learning and Skills Council, the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Partnership will be holding a free seminar on Woodland Surveying. The event, which is aimed at woodland owners and volunteers, will be held in May at a venue within the World Heritage Site. The event will look at different aspects of woodlands and how to survey them in order to assess the value of the woodland. For more details contact Debbie Court, the Lowland Derbyshire Biodiversity Officer on debbie.court@derbyshire.gov.uk or 01629 585611.

The Learning and Skills Council funds have also helped the World Heritage Site Partnership develop:

- A training day for staff and volunteers involved in education at the various mill sites to enable on-site staff to see where activities on their sites link to schools, enable more effective marketing to schools and perhaps stimulate planning and delivery of new programmes and activities.
- Training on website management, creation of sound files and other IT skills which could then be cascaded out to volunteers and staff to help widen the education offer to schools and help them set up IT-related heritage projects.
- A training day for volunteers and staff in the mills, showing them other industrial heritage/ textile museums at Helmsore and Styal, how they operate and what similar challenges they face.
- A training session for Belper volunteers so the North Mill can operate as a new franchise tourist information centre.

New Local Nature Reserve

THE most recent Local Nature Reserve (LNR) to be designated in Derby is 'Darley and Nutwood Nature Reserve' which became an LNR on 3 January. The 10 hectare site is situated within the World Heritage Site alongside the River Derwent. The majority of the site is a former municipal refuse tip and supports mixed grassland and scrub with regular sightings of snipe, kestrel and bee orchid. The rest of the site is mature woodland and wetland with large hazel and willow.

Nutwood represents part of what was much larger woodland which appears on early Ordnance Survey maps so it is thought to be ancient woodland. The site can be accessed from South Avenue in the northern part of Darley Abbey village.

Nutwood and Darley LNR joins seven other LNRs already designated within the City. For more information visit <http://www.derby.gov.uk/Environment/WildDerby/065Goingwildaboutderby.htm> or to get involved at Darley and Nutwood contact Keith Dodd on Keith@dodd394.fsnet.co.uk

Wild About Nature

The Wild About Nature project started in June 2006 is a collaboration between Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) and aims to maintain, enhance and restore around 14 sites of nature conservation interest within Derbyshire. Several of these sites, including Belper Parks, Duffield Millennium Meadow, Dunsley Meadows in the Via Gellia and Crich Chase Grassland, are within or close to the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site and all are excellent examples of the different types of flower rich meadows and pastures to be found within the World Heritage Site.

The Project is multi-dimensional in that it offers assistance with environmental education, ecological surveys and practical management and tries to include local people wherever possible. Since autumn 2006 scrub clearance has been undertaken at Crich Chase Grassland and Dunsley Meadows LNR. This year DWT has undertaken repeat surveys of the vegetation at each site and a series of invertebrate surveys have been completed. Educational events have taken place at a number of sites with both schools and the wider community. One of the most significant aspects of the project has been the enhancement and creation of flower rich grasslands at Duffield Millennium Meadow and Belper Parks.

Species likely to benefit from the work include plants such as cowslip, restharrow, bee orchid, agrimony, betony heath milkwort and devil's-bit and field scabious as well as waxcap fungi, butterflies such as the dingy skipper and a host of invertebrates, especially bumblebees and hoverflies which require a good supply of nectar and pollen through the season.

For more information contact Tim Brooks Community Wildspaces Officer on 01773 841566 or Kieron Huston on 01773 881188.

Flooding and Historic Buildings

THE ever-present risks and hazards of flooding are with us again. Owners of buildings close to the Derwent need to be mindful of the dangers and the effects of river water getting into basements and even worse into living accommodation. Quite apart from the inconvenience and costs of flood damage, the added dimension of loss and damage to the fabric of historic buildings must be guarded against and plans put in place to minimise the impact and after effects.

Following the disastrous flooding in 2001 and 2002, English Heritage published a Technical Advice Note in 2004 titled "Flooding and Historic Buildings". The Note provides guidance on preventative measures, first aid and other ways to minimise flood damage. It suggests sources of specialist help to inspect, conserve, repair or restore historic properties after such disasters. Of course prevention is better than dealing with the damage and more so in the case of irreplaceable heritage assets

The Technical Note can be downloaded from the English Heritage website www.english-heritage.org.uk or can be obtained free from English Heritage Customer Services by phoning 0870 333 1181 or by email on customers@english-heritage.org.uk.