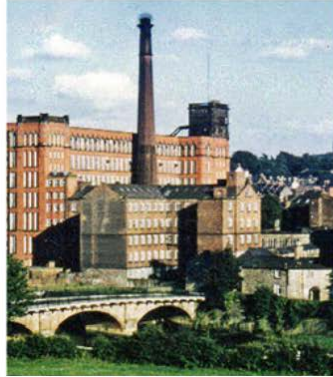




SUMMER NEWS LETTER



Hello and Welcome to our Summer Newsletter!

A year after Our Belper Mills (OBM) was formally constituted, I'm delighted to say that we've grown our membership, raised our profile and most importantly, made sure your voice is heard when it comes to the future of Belper Mills.

One glance at the sad façade of the Mills and it's easy to believe that nothing is happening, when in fact, behind the scenes, it certainly is. As you'll read in this our second newsletter, progress is being made towards an alternative solution.

It's a complex problem as you might imagine; an iconic and hugely significant historical site in need of a modern-day solution; the aim to retain its heritage whilst finding a viable and sustainable future. But I'm convinced the momentum is underway towards that solution not least because there's now a strong partnership of like-minded people and organisations all aiming to achieve the same ends.

I'm always buoyed by the sheer enthusiasm and keenness of local people to bring back the Mills to their former glory, whenever I attend an event where OBM is present. It's definitely a hugely important historical site, but it's also a fantastic opportunity for the future of the town and with a bit of imagination, an alternative plan and your support, I'm hopeful you'll share my optimism for the future of Our Belper Mills.

Happy reading

Roger

Roger H Moors – Chair, Our Belper Mills

The story continues...

In its crucial capacity representing the voice of the public, Our Belper Mills has been invited to be an integral part of a steering group tasked with the progressing and preserving the future of the Belper mills complex. As a result, OBM was asked to launch the '**Belper Mills World Heritage Matters**' consultation project at our open event on 23rd April, held at No28.

Funded by Derbyshire County Council, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, and the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Partnership, a series of consultation workshops is being undertaken throughout the summer. The workshops will gather data to enable an appropriate, feasible and sustainable alternative plan for the mills to be prepared by a specialist consultant team, already secured and in place. This resulting alternative plan means that there is a viable option ready, in the event that either, the current planning application is refused, or it is approved, but works do not commence in a timely manner.



OBM presence at 3rd May Public Engagement Event

Data gathered from the original OBM '[6 Big Questions](#)' (as set out on our first public engagement event May, 2022 also available to complete online on our website), is included as part of the consultation process and representatives from OBM were invited to take part in the first workshop on 3rd May. The workshop commenced with a visit to the North Mill basement, a tour around the external site, followed by discussions and questions posed regarding various aspects, proposals, ideas and challenges related to the site and potential benefits, impact and long-term future.

The situation right now...

Planning permission remains undetermined, with no firm decision date in place. Records show a recent amendment (10/7/23) to the current application, with the original proposals now being the plans under consideration.

<https://www.ambervalley.gov.uk/planning/development-management/view-a-planning-application/AVA/2018/0818>

OBM is recognised as the means of representing the public voice. As mentioned previously, OBM is part of the steering group currently working on an alternative sustainable, viable and costed plan being ready.

We will continue to keep you updated.

Mills Around the World...

Taking a look at one of the many examples of mills that have been successfully restored and repurposed....

Salts Mill – Saltaire, West Yorkshire



Salts Mill, Photograph Taken by [Richard S, TripAdvisor Contributor](#)

Leading industrialist, Sir Titus Salt, was responsible for a mill town near Shipley in Yorkshire called Saltaire. Unlike Belper, the town did not exist before the mill and both were built by and named after Sir Salt. A philanthropist like the Strutts, he built the town and set up his mills there after observing the poor working conditions of workers in nearby Bradford, hoping to improve his workers' lives. At the time of completion in 1853 Salts Mill was the largest industrial building in the world. It ran as a textile mill until 1986 when it closed and the following year the building was bought by Jonathan Silver.

Jonathan Silver was an entrepreneur born in Bradford in 1949. His skills were already evident when he used to spend his lunch breaks at school buying and selling furniture. His real interest was in art and textiles, studying Art History and Textiles at Leeds University before going on to have 13 menswear shops nationwide by 1979.

By the time he bought Salts Mill he had already been involved in other successful regeneration projects. He took it from a poor, dilapidated state to being an art gallery and retail and commercial units. The first Bradford Festival saw a theatrical performance being shown there and it was whilst running the bar during the performance that Silver had the idea of creating a gallery at the mill devoted to David Hockney, a favourite artist of his. This led to the creation of the 1853 Gallery, named to commemorate the year the mill was built.

Besides the shopping and restaurant outlets Salts Mill complex is now used regularly for arts, theatrical and musical performances. It also houses two regular exhibitions – People and Process and Saltaire History. Sadly Jonathan Silver died of cancer aged just 48 in 1997. The village of Saltaire became a Unesco World Heritage Site four years later in 2001. The Silver family have continued to develop the site in honour of Jonathan's vision. In a quote from "The Yorkshire Post" they went on to say that they wanted to "preserve the building not just because it's a Grade II* listed building but for all the things that go on in it today, tomorrow and for years to come".

Sources:

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salts_Mill

<https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/salts-mill-a-symbol-of-industrial-heritage-that-jonathan-silver-transformed-into-a-thriving-hub-for-arts-and-commerce-1744001>

https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g672783-d211775-Reviews-Salts_Mill-Shipley_Bradford_West_Yorkshire_England.html

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2086503/The-wish-dying-friend-helped-Hockney-love-Britain-again.html>

Mill Memories...

Whenever we start chatting to people, more often than not, there's a story!

The Mills are so much more than buildings, architecture, history, heritage and currently, challenges. They are about local people. Generations of families who worked there or are connected in some way. We'd love to hear your stories and receive any photos (images of the interior working mill are particularly of interest), so that we can create an archive of Mill Memories before the stories are lost forever. If possible, we will try to feature some of them in future newsletters, so do let us know yours! Please contact us at ourbelpermills@gmail.co.uk and we'll get back to you.

Memories shared from Gill and Eric Badder

For many, working at Belper Mills meant they played a part in their life for many hours of the day but for those living near them they were part of the fabric of life every day. Gill and Eric Badder were born and have lived in the Belper Lane area for most of their lives and say coming home over the bridge 'through' the mill complex made it feel like entering a different world, part of Belper and yet separate from it.

Gill remembers crossing the bridge as a child when the sides were solid and she couldn't see the water from her pushchair. The roar of the weir was very loud and made her feel quite scared. She was always glad when they got to the other side. It seemed a very mysterious place to her with it not being otherwise accessible and the now open archways then having big gates. She never used the access near the old Chucklebutties to the River Gardens until much later in life although it could be seen from the gardens. On the south mill side there were two pools of water about level with the pavement the other side of the railings and when these were emptied, presumably for maintenance, two dark tunnels that were usually full of water could be seen which looked so creepy to her as a child they were a source of nightmares for Gill for years after she saw them!

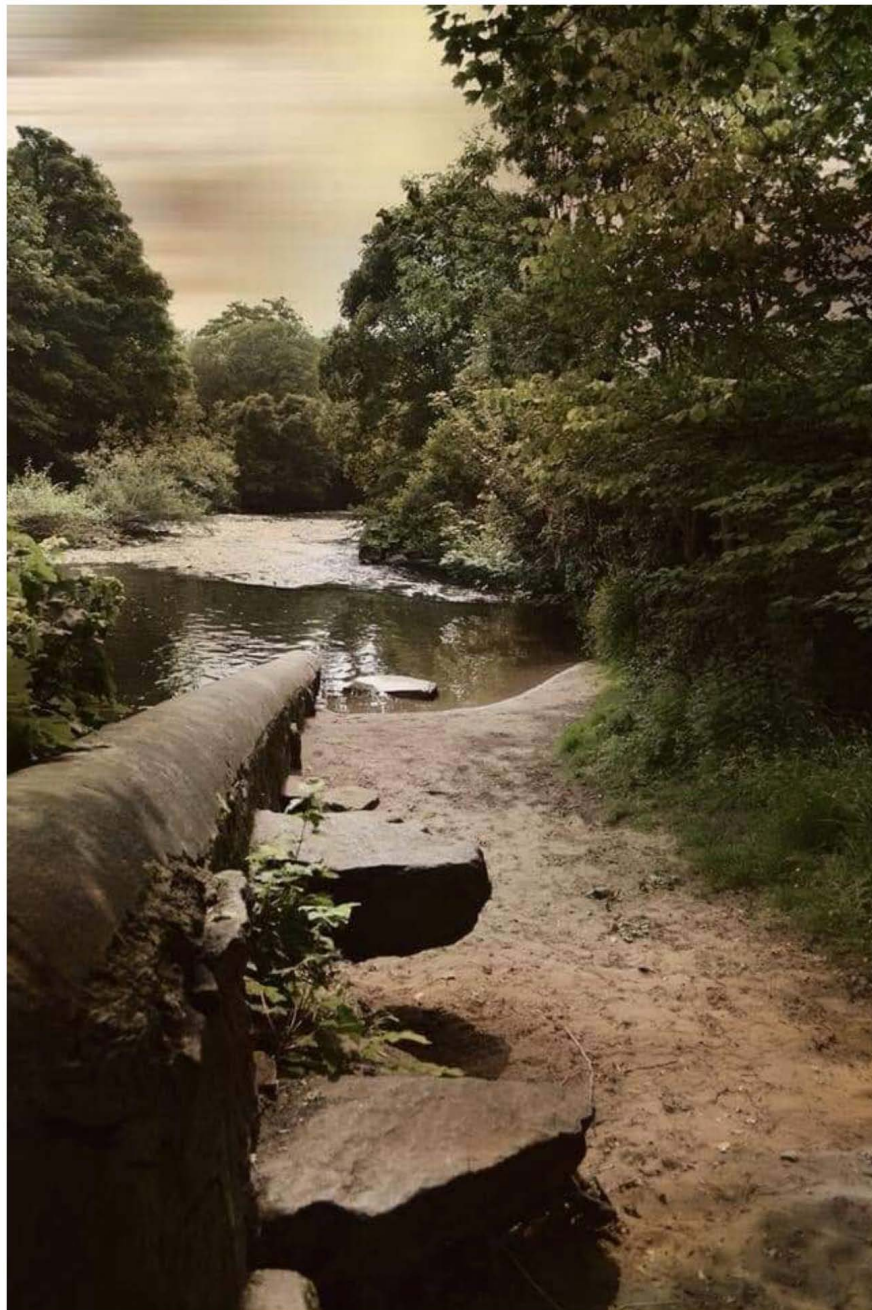


Photo used by kind permission of Emily Lawrence née Donoghue. Posted in Belper and Proud Facebook group August 2020 – a great site for Belper memories past and present.

The mill and weir provided a kind of background, white noise to their daily life even through the night and Eric recalls that you could set your watch by the sound of the hooter declaring the shift change at 7 o'clock, or mill blower as Gill referred to it saying it reminded her of a ship's blower. As well as noise the dominant presence of the mills were a constant source of light and the night sky was never dark. The Jubilee Clock tower on the west mill, which was lit up at night-time, stood sentinel over the town and they both remember being able to see light through the holes that were made in it from being shot at. Many workers would arrive for their shift on the buses that brought people from out of town and on a Friday, lots of the women would turn up with their hair still in curlers. When Gill asked her Mum why she said some didn't own a hairdryer and they would use the warmth from working in the mill to set their hair ready for enjoying a good night out after work. Like other employers in the town, the investment the mill owners made in training employees meant women often found they could go back to their jobs after leaving to raise a family.

The only time Gill went in the mill as a youngster was on a Long Row school trip when she was about 8 years old and they got to see all the different processes involved in making the end products. As children they would sometimes play near the river and going to the small cut near the bridge felt a bit like going to the seaside, sometimes taking a picnic and Gill remembers having a swim in the basin.

Gill described the mills as feeling like the engine of the town and along with the other factories of the town there was a sense that everything was working, everything was producing and busy. The silence since they have stood empty makes the area feel very different. Both Gill and Eric hope that something will be done with the mills before it is too late and they are lost.

Image source: Belper and Proud Facebook post dated 9th August 2020

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0RmQuST3RojzfeajjqzkM6pjgrqWaEigJmWqktpwAiy6zjELF2bkja8wmAzZ4Ho7l&id=1405509403004361)

[story_fbid=pfbid0RmQuST3RojzfeajjqzkM6pjgrqWaEigJmWqktpwAiy6zjELF2bkja8wmAzZ4Ho7l&id=1405509403004361](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0RmQuST3RojzfeajjqzkM6pjgrqWaEigJmWqktpwAiy6zjELF2bkja8wmAzZ4Ho7l&id=1405509403004361)

Beyond the Windows...

Meet the Artist - Jenny Stevenson

In May 2022 at Our Belper Mills first Public Engagement we invited Derby based Artist Jenny Stevenson to come and show her winning entry from the Cromford Mills Art Competition, since then she has gone on to create an amazing body of work influenced by the Derbyshire Mills. We caught up with her at No28 in Belper for the preview of her first solo exhibition supported by Fleet Arts "Beyond The Windows" to chat about Belper Mills and her inspirational art work.



What do you think Belper Mills might look like in the future?

Over the course of my project, I did a lot of research and spoke to people in the community about their memories of the mills. It was clear that the mills hold a special place in the hearts of the Belper community and how they hold an iconic status within the town. Many commented on how sad they are to see them in their current state of disrepair. There is hope in the success stories of the mill buildings that are still in use and have been redeveloped and repurposed, finding a way to thrive in the present age.

Where does your inspiration come from when the building is in such a sad state?

I'm drawn to the textures of weathered and worn surfaces and details that often go unnoticed, they tell stories of resilience and the passing of time. I find beauty in imperfection and am drawn to the hidden histories beneath the surface. It's through exploring the emotional connections and memories they hold that sparks my creativity, allowing for the creation of artwork that captures their essence and brings their stories to life once more. By piecing together fragments of collage papers and adding in thread and fabric, I have created layered abstract works that evoke memories of the mills and the people who worked there. Through my art, I hope to transport viewers back in time, creating a sense of connection to the past while also looking forward to the future.

What is the significance of using more than one collage in each piece?

One of the themes that runs throughout this collection is the power of multiples. By working in a series, I am able to enhance the impact of each individual piece, creating a cohesive whole that also functions as separate works of art. This approach allows me to impart narrative, create a sense of sequence, and show elements of the same subject matter from different angles, as though the viewer is looking around a place. Using multiples also suggests repetition and pattern, reflecting the day-to-day repetition of tasks that were carried out in the mills and the communities of workers that were brought together. The grids of imagery also reflect the many windows of the mills, which are a dominating feature of these buildings.



I can see handwriting in some of the pieces - does it mean anything?

Handwriting with people's personal stories and experiences of the mills is particularly meaningful to me. I wrote out the stories and my own experiences of visiting with pencil on tissue paper which becomes transparent once glued, leaving just the text. I love seeing glimpses of the written marks showing through the layers. In this way, I am able to embed memories and create a sense of history within my work.

What is your process?

It starts with research and drawing on location. Sketchbooks are my creative companions, essential for developing my ideas and capturing the essence of a place. They are visual diaries filled with inspiration, notes, and diagrams, allowing me to test and organise my thoughts while embracing the joy of exploration and experimentation. The drawings, marks, textures and colours collected in this phase are used to develop my ideas and create my own unique papers to collage with, which informs the final pieces. Collage using mixed media is my preferred way of working because it's tactile - physically moving materials around to form a layered composition and responding to what's already there, instinctively knowing which fragment to use next. I enjoy working in a space somewhere between 2D and 3D, experimenting to find new ways to present it that enhances the initial idea.



How long did it take you to complete the project?

It took me just over a year from start to finish, working on smaller projects alongside it. I took part in the Cromford Mills Art Competition in May 2022, working amidst the breath taking Mill Yard and surrounded by a 360-degree view. The day made a huge impression on me, I enjoyed working outside and had so many interested visitors stopping to say hello and share their own stories of family connections to the mills - I knew my journey was far from over! Winning the competition sparked a desire to start an entire collection, capturing the essence of all of the Textile Mills in Derbyshire. Showing my work at the Our Belper Mills event gave me the opportunity to meet and talk with the Belper community and also Ola from Fleet Arts, who went on to support me to exhibit the work at No.28, Belper. I have since visited all the mills and taken time to observe, draw and research to inform my pieces for the collection. I took this information back to my studio where I developed my ideas, the rest of the pieces in the 'Beyond the Windows' collection were completed in the last six months.

OBM Milling about...

OBM at Belper Heritage Day - 29th April



A great event at No28, well attended with a chance to hear stories and heritage tales with a different talk every half an hour! Various stalls with artefacts and items on display from Belper North Mill and the very talented Simon Aldridge also brought along his incredible Lego models of the mill (minus the peregrine falcons!!) Great to see it looking fabulous – with the windows intact!



OBM at Belper Food Festival - 16th July



Despite various sporting events including a Wimbledon final, the very changeable weather didn't stop play! Thanks to everyone who helped on the day, the marvellous Railway team and all who stopped to chat!

Spreading the Word...

We've been updating our website, www.ourbelpermills.co.uk and now signed up over 600 supporters, 208 of whom are registered as 'Members', meaning they'd like to be actively involved at some point and can also vote at the OBM AGM or public meeting as required.

it's important to keep our numbers growing. By signing up to be part of OBM, everyone can help by representing the strength of opinion – no matter how varied! More people. Louder voice.

We've also got a presence now on LinkedIn for OBM friends within business, commerce and industry.

We now have over 1200 Facebook followers! By '**following**' and '**liking**' our [Facebook page](#) and posts (keep sharing them too, please!), the anonymous analytical statistical data demonstrates genuine, valid interest. All of this is vital information for the key partnerships involved in the future of the mill complex. More people. Louder voice.

The OBM committee is scheduled to meet on a monthly basis, to plan ahead and keep progress active and current, so we look forward to more events and positive media exposure to come!

Future events are being planned, so do keep checking your emails for more information as we announce them!

Fascinating Fact...

Thanks to OBM friend Neil Gillett for sharing his incredible archive material

Did you know that the telephone number for the East Mill was '**National Telephone No 1**'?

(Also note the telegraph address '**STITCHING**' – what would hash-tag social media make of that now!)



And finally...

We welcome any feedback, suggestions or content contributions for future editions to ourbelpermills@gmail.com

We are always keen to hear from anyone who wishes to take an active role in any area that helps OBM continue to be the main communication link between the public voice and all parties involved in the future of the mill complex. Thanks to those who have offered their help so far! Please contact us at ourbelpermills@gmail.com

With the future in mind, preserving our unique heritage for the next generation... Here's something for our younger friends!.... Or anyone who wants to get creative!

We are very lucky to have peregrine falcons nesting in our mill. The peregrine is our biggest falcon; it is dark slate-grey above and white below, with black bars across its chest and belly. It has a white throat and cheeks, and a strong, black moustache and mask. Peregrines are among the fastest animals on the planet, reaching speeds of up to 200 miles per hour when 'stooping' or diving down on its prey.

Here's one for you to colour in: [Download Peregrine Falcon colouring page...](#)

Thanks for reading!

Please sign up, 'follow', 'like' and share!

Newsletter comments or contributions are all welcome at ourbelpermills@gmail.com

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