



AUTUMN NEWS LETTER



Mill through the mist – courtesy & thanks to Riley Halls

Hello and a very warm welcome to our Autumn Newsletter!

The OBM team has been working very hard over the last month or so to put plans in place for our November Autumn Extravaganza Event. I'm delighted to announce that we have an exciting mix of Art/Craft stalls, Photo/Art Competitions (with prizes!) and Speakers lined up for the afternoon of Sunday 19th November. It's free to come along and not only will you be able to hear updates on our progress over the last 18 months but our headline speaker will be none other than Ashley Franklin, who'll be talking about his latest book. All the details can be found below in the Newsletter but here's the main information you need, so put it in your diary, on your calendar and tell all your friends. Make sure you come along to see us all and who knows, you might even pickup one or two crafty Christmas presents while you're there. Look forward to seeing you all on the 19th!

Roger

Roger H Moors – Chair, Our Belper Mills

The story continues...

The consultation project '**Belper Mills World Heritage Matters**', launched by OBM in April of this year is still ongoing. Funded by Derbyshire County Council, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, and the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Partnership, a series of data gathering workshops have now taken place and we await a further public online survey to conclude this phase. The objective of the consultation project is 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 would mean 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. We'll continue to monitor progress, ready to announce any further news as soon as details become available.

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...

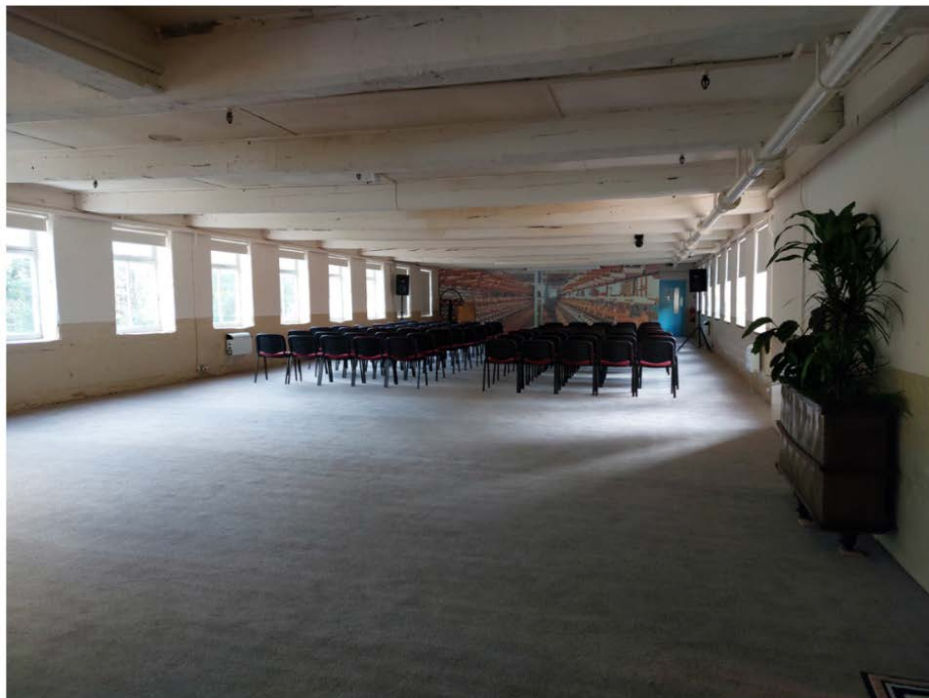
Taking a look at one of the many examples of mills that have been successfully restored and re-purposed....

Masson Mills - Matlock, Derbyshire - by Rachel Hodgkinson

It was such a sad day when Masson Mills Shopping Village had to close its doors in March 2020 and were unable to re-open after the pandemic. With over 60 retail contributors it had been attracting over 400,000 visitors a year at its busiest. So, it was fantastic news to hear that Derwent Hydro Ltd had bought the place, a well-known local company owned by the Needle family from Duffield who were involved in the renovation of the hydro there in the 1990s and who continued to look after it until they bought the site last autumn. They have been busy modernising the hydro to improve its efficiency whilst working to re-open the museum visitor experience as Masson Mills. This is Derwent Hydro's first venture of this nature and they have been able to retain local experience and knowledge through tour guides Kevin and Andrew who worked at the mill for many years.



Relatively unchanged from its pre-pandemic state, the company have lots of ideas in the pipeline besides the museum tours including meeting rooms and a large conference centre that can host 150 people. In fact, the conference centre was enjoying its very first event, a Peak District networking event, the day I was there interviewing the company. I had a look at the centre and what a fantastic space! Warm and inviting with a great 'break-out' social space for relaxing as well as an excellent audio/visual area for talks with the ability for the space to be adapted for different needs whilst retaining and showcasing original features of the mill. Looking at the photos I think you'll agree it has lots of potential and you can contact them on the details below if you're interested in booking it.



Along with their new ideas they are keen to maintain an ethos of sustainability, recycling where they can. The visitor centre uses Faltrade in the café and has lots of original items for you to see including bobbins of original Masson string for sale alongside yarns and other textile memorabilia. Thankfully, nothing had been thrown away when it closed in 2020 and they had found it packed full of treasures that they feel it is very important to preserve for everyone to enjoy. They were really pleased how well what they had done was received when they reopened the complex and are looking forward to making good use of the space whilst preserving the mills' textile heritage.

You can get in touch with Masson Mills by phone on 01629 581001 or email info@massonmills.co.uk

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 Vinni Bowmer in conversation with Rachel Hodgkinson

With our 'Mills Around The World' article being about Masson Mills it seemed fitting to be able to share memories from someone who worked there. Vinni, Middleton born and bred, remembers leaving school at fifteen and starting work at the mill just six months later at Christmastime as a doubler. He can remember the process as if it was yesterday explaining to me how he would take the thread under the rod in a trough, which could contain water or be dry depending on what was needed, and then taking it through various rollers to the traveller arms where it wound onto the cone. There was a handle to open up where the cogs were which had to be set up according to the type of yarn. The 'cheeses' of yarn came on creels, boards with pegs to put them on and he had to learn the different types of yarn and take them from the creel to the appropriate machine. He had to make sure the cheeses were staggered to ensure production never stopped. Some machines had bobbins that were so big it took three days and nights to fill them. In particular he remembers the dishcloth yarn that was used to make the piping cord used on settees and mattresses.



Workers had to be eighteen years old before working the night shift, twelve hours starting at seven pm until it changed to continental hours and started at six thirty pm. There were three shifts (A, B and C) and Vinni was on shift C where he remembers Walter Kelly as the shift foreman. Working four days on, three days off he would alternate between day and night shifts. He worked on the machines in the shed and remembers that there were four of them working in there, each manning six machines. When he first started he couldn't hear anything except the humming noise but after a few days he grew accustomed to it and it became background noise. The workrooms were always warm and on freezing winter days he was always glad to get inside. He also worked for a time at East Mill in Belper on the sixth floor where Tom Lichfield was the supervisor. Vinni would distribute the yarn to the women working on the coning machines. When East Mill closed down he transferred back to Masson Mill but that also stopped running.

There was a great community feeling at the mill with Christmas parties put on for the youngsters and Vinni can recall the canteen had a stage area for events. This became a warehouse which later made way for the car park there now. He also remembers the 'initiation' everyone went through – being 'greased up' and thrown in a skip! Other memories include Glen Mill that made crepe bandages for the war effort.

Many members of his family worked at the mill including his Mum who started there when she was fourteen years old and her sister, Lily. His brother was also a doubler and his sister, Rosie, who worked there all her life as a cop winder was given a gold watch for long service. Family also worked at the quarries and friends at the limestone mine in Middleton. The dust from the quarries, the explosion at Dene Quarry down Cromford Hill, short work during the miners' strike and farm work when not working at the mill are other things he recalls. One thing Vinni mentions at several points is how much he enjoyed his job and that he was very happy there. A great advert for Masson Mills.

Image source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doubling_\(textiles\)#/media/File:Masson_Mills_WTM_6_Doubling_5851.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doubling_(textiles)#/media/File:Masson_Mills_WTM_6_Doubling_5851.JPG)
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15025529>

A pitch with a View...

In the year when our Lionesses did us proud, Our Belper Mills is delighted to have formed a special relationship with Belper Town Football Club!

Belper Town's nickname, 'The Nailers', came about because the craft of nail making began in Belper in the middle ages when it was the site of a hunting lodge for John of Gaunt. The huntsmen needed nails for the shoes of their horses and the trade in nails eventually grew.



BTFC Training in 1954 - Courtesy Tim Harrison

Nail making was a domestic industry with the Nailers working in family groups and Belper Nailers were world renowned for the quality of their work. However, in 1861, the introduction of machinery to manufacture nails was the beginning of the end for the local trade which died out altogether at the beginning of the century to be replaced by modern industry and commerce in the town.

Like the nail making industry, Belper Town FC has faded away in the past. Originally formed in 1883, the Nailers went out of existence three times through lack of finance.

The main highlight in those early years was an FA Cup 1st Round tie against Sheffield Wednesday on 15th October 1887 in which the Nailers were narrowly defeated 2-3 by the Yorkshire giants.

The Club reformed, possibly for the fourth time, in 1951 and took up residence at the current ground at Christchurch Meadow. In those early days, there were very few amenities on the ground and, for a number of seasons, players used to get changed at the Talbot Hotel, a few hundred yards from the ground.

The ground was purchased in 1986 from the owners of the adjacent mill complex, for the princely sum of £6,000 and has afforded the club the security of tenure over its facilities ever since.



Photograph courtesy Flora Martyr (www.floramartyr.com)

The club plays an integral part of the local community and is committed to supporting a range of junior and adult teams, including an adult ladies' section with two teams and a thriving junior section with 29 junior boys and girls' teams involving over 350 young people. The club also runs Saturday morning community coaching sessions, open to children of all abilities.

The junior teams provide an opportunity for youngsters to learn, play and enjoy the game and also the opportunity to progress to (semi) professional football.

The club operates a full-time educational academy for those aspiring to achieve higher educational qualifications, whilst enjoying professional football coaching and playing competitive football against other football academies



Our Belper Mills is looking forward to enjoying the superb facilities which also provide some fantastic opportunities as a wonderful venue to host events too! Options include the spacious Nailers Function Room, served by a fully stocked bar and kitchen facilities, or for smaller gatherings, the self contained Boardroom, or Sponsors Lounge which boasts a panoramic view of the beautiful Derbyshire countryside.

With the glorious mill as the backdrop making this a truly envied location, it's no wonder the Raygar Stadium features in a book entitled 'British Football's Greatest Grounds'!

We look forward to following the Nailers progress and wish the whole team, lead by Manager Lee Attenborough, every success.

<https://www.belpertownfc.co.uk/>

OBM Milling about...

Belper has reached the finals in the 'Great Town' category for The Urbanism Awards 2023.

The awards are the Academy's primary platform for recognising the best, most enduring or most improved urban environments. The Academy of Urbanism (AoU) announced fifteen shortlisted finalists across the five categories for the Urbanism Awards 2023. Through a process of public nomination and member-led shortlisting, three finalists were confirmed for 'Great Place', 'Great Street', 'Great Neighbourhood', 'Great Town', and 'European City of the Year'.

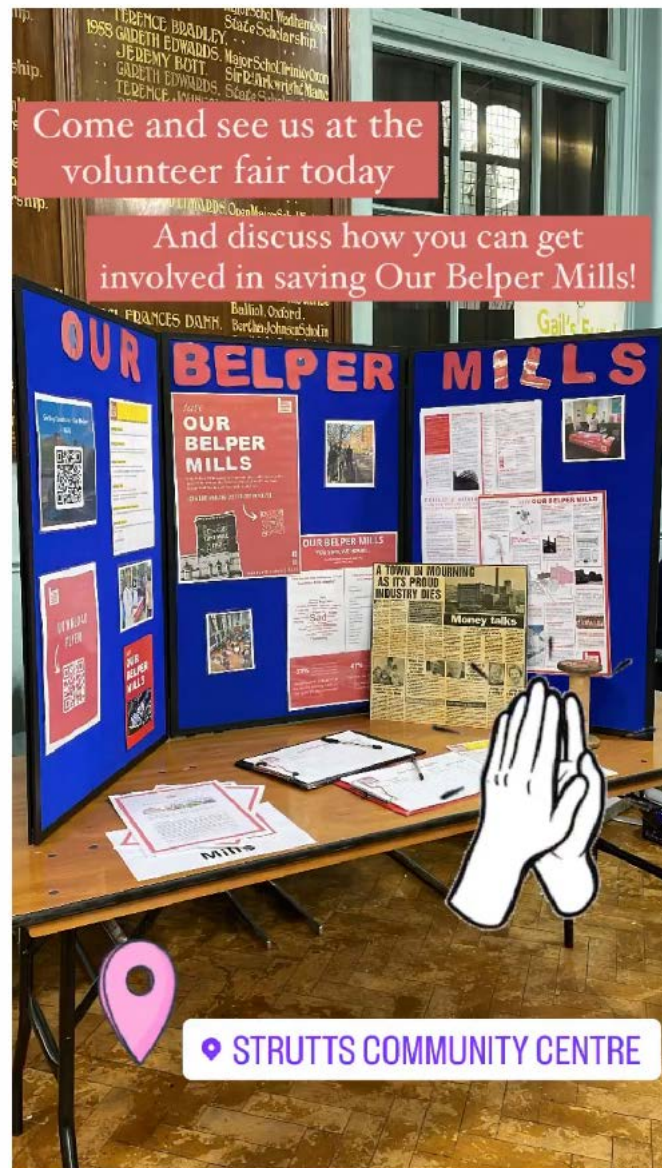


<https://www.theaou.org/pages/the-urbanism-awards>

OBM was invited to be involved as the judges visited on 15th September to make an in – person assessment visit. An opportunity to offer an exclusive 'backstage look at each finalist!

We're up against Caernarfon, Wales and Stromness, Scotland so it's another great achievement for Belper. Fingers crossed!

OBM at the Volunteer Fair



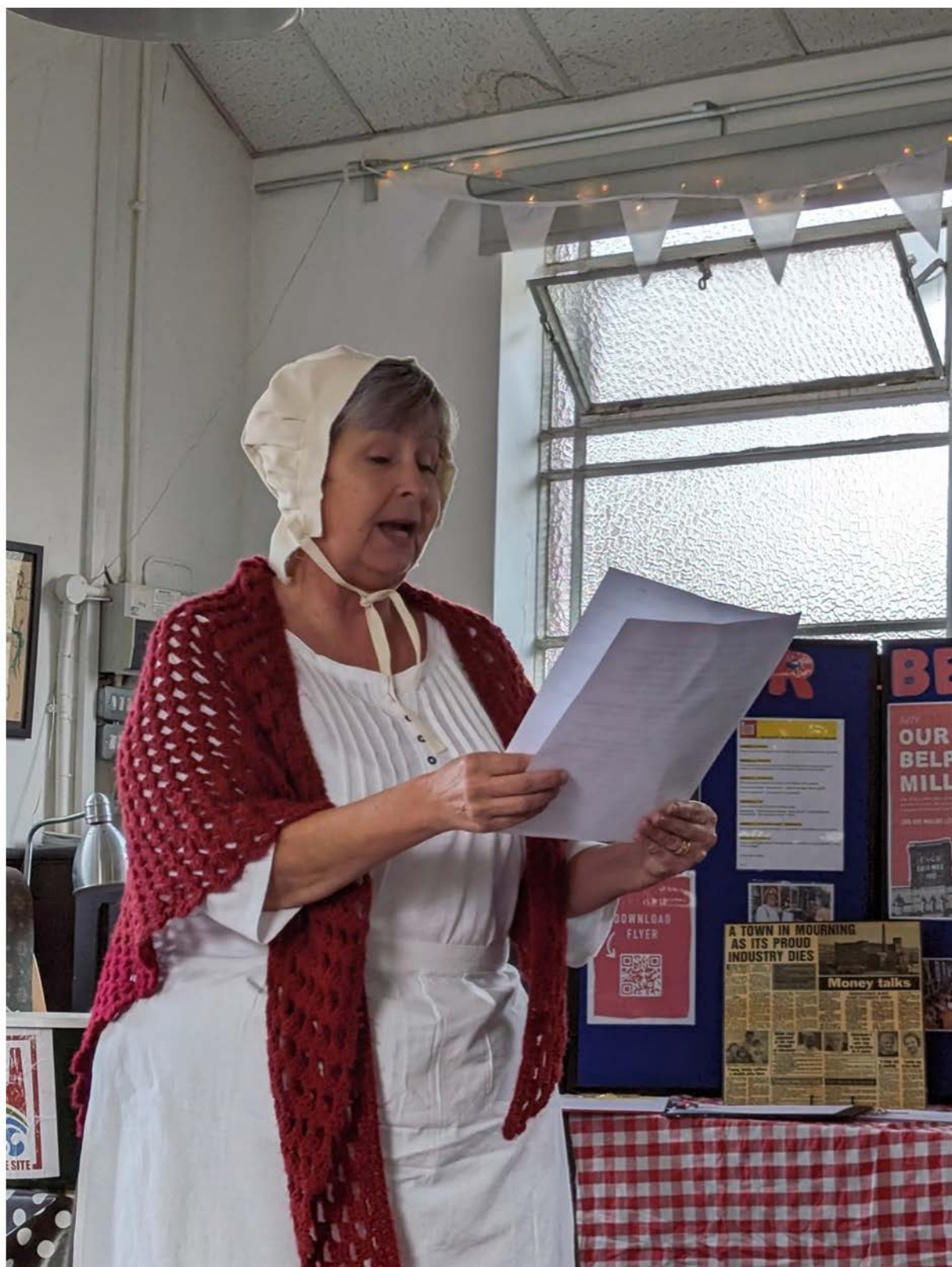
OBM took part in the recent Volunteer Fair held at Strutts community centre on 16th September. This offered the chance for people to see the many volunteer opportunities that exist in the community and the event was well attended. OBM are always looking for extra pairs of hands to help in a variety of ways, so please get in touch! ourbelpermills@gmail.com

OBM at Belper U3A

OBM were invited to speak about our role and aims, at the **Belper u3a open meeting on 6th October**. The meeting was very well attended and many people signed up to join us! Some interesting questions were raised too, but as ever, the overwhelming feedback from the audience, was to preserve our mills in SOME way!

u3a is a lifelong learning co-operative for people no longer in fulltime employment, or having caring responsibilities, with opportunities to participate in learning, social and recreational activities, not for qualifications but for FUN! Belper & District u3a is a registered charity, with over 800 members involved in over 90 different groups or activities. For details – visit <https://u3asites.org.uk/belper>

Georgian Festival - Belper Day!



OBM were present at the **Georgian Festival – Belper day on October 8th at No 28**. There was also a special poetry performance featuring Belper poet (and OBM stalwart!) Carol Brewer, performing a few of her own poems all about Belper, including a brand new verse for children (called 'GRANDMA's PANTS'!), created especially for this family event! Everyone was invited to join in the fun!

Fascinating Fact; What Lies Beneath...



Tim & Sally Harrison kindly shared their amazing pictures, taken during a wander around on on 2nd August. Tim says 'as we walked out of the river gardens, we noticed the water behind the mill was really low. We had never seen this before in 25 years. We walked to towards the front and realised the water had been drained and two men were working near the filters. I took these three photos as a reminder of the day the water went...

We showed the images to independent researcher and all round hydro power expert Ian Jackson, who shared information from Derwent Hydro explaining that; 'The recent drain downs have been for two reasons. We have been upgrading the mechanism which controls the main inlet gate and have also been carrying out maintenance on the screen cleaner chains. Neither job is fully finished so further drain downs are likely in the next month. These are a d-hoc drain down situations but we drain down at least once annually as part of our planned maintenance'. So, keep watch for future viewing opportunities!

ADVANCE NOTICE !

EXCITING EVENT - November 19th

Nailers Conference Centre, Belper Town Football club, 2pm – 5pm!

Competitions, arts & crafts stalls and refreshments, (also incorporating the first OBM AGM, where those signed up as Members can vote). Supporters wishing to become Members (able to vote and volunteer) will be able to do so in advance of the AGM. More details to follow soon!

FREE Entry!!! - Free Parking on site!!!

Sunday 19th November 2-5 pm - The Nailers Conference Room - Belper Town Football Ground

Guest Speaker - **Ashley Franklin**



**OUR
BELPER
MILLS** AUTUMN FAIR

WITH GUEST SPEAKER
ASHLEY FRANKLIN

A CELEBRATION EVENT
OF ART, STALLS,
COMPETITIONS AND
AGM

19th NOV
2-5 PM
Nailers Conference Centre,
Belper Football Club

www.ourbelpermills.co.uk

Competition Time...

It's your turn to capture the '**Essence of the Mills**' as OBM are running **two competitions** between now and our November Extravaganzaone for everyone to enter and one for Under 16's...with prizes being awarded on the 19th November during the afternoon at the Nailers.

OBM Photography Competition....we're looking for a photograph that has your unique take on the Mills - a picture that represents your interpretation of what the mills say to you. You could nip down and take the picture as it's getting dark, or as the sun is streaming through the windows...perhaps taken from an unusual aspect or maybe just one part of the building....it's up to you.

First prize of £50 and one commendation prize at stake. Judged by Ashley Franklin

OBM Picture Competition- under 16's, Let's find out what budding artists are out there!

Get your paints, crayons and pencils out (whatever you prefer) and enter the OBM Picture Competition. It's all about your take on the mills and how it looks and feels to you. Bring your creation with you on the day and we'll display them all. One entry per person please. **Why not make this a school project** perhaps...go talk to your teacher!

First prize of £30 and two runner up prizes . Judged by Ashley Franklin

(We reserve the right to display the entries on our website and future publications – with credits of course)

For other talks, tours & treats visit;



[Belper North Mill](#)



[Belper Heritage Society](#)



[Cromford Mills](#)

And finally...

Something for our younger supporters (or anyone who likes a puzzle!)....

A MILL CROSSWORD! [Download Crossword](#) - [Answer sheet download](#)

Thanks for reading!

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

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

Newsletter produced with grateful acknowledgement to Phoebe McMillan, Carol Brewer, Dave Laughlin at BTFC, Rachel Hodgkinson, and all our contributors.