

Stroudwater Textile Trust – Chairman’s Report 2012-13

In 2012 Jenny Tann had to retire from the Board of Trustees for health reasons. She had steered the Trust through some choppy waters during her time at the helm, and I and the other Trustees are immensely grateful for everything she has done. Regardless of her resignation she, once again, agreed to edit Warp & Weft. Anna Shelley also resigned as a Trustee because of work pressures and we are grateful for her many contributions. Although we lost two Trustees, we have gained one important new one: Jane Ford who has been a stalwart of the Trust from the start and has been involved in just about everything that we do.

The year has been a busy one. The fulling stocks were installed at Dunkirk, which is looking very smart after redecoration by a team of volunteers. Mick Guy donated the clocking in machine that has also been installed at Dunkirk. The Longford’s clock now has a home with the Middlemore water wheels, expertly installed by the Dunkirk Management. There was an important exhibition organised by Ian Mackintosh at the Stroud Subscription Rooms: Victorian Lodgemore: Towards Perfection. It was well attended and attracted many favourable comments. The Trust even ventured into theatricals, when they presented the show “The Noisy Frame”, the story of the Yorkshire Luddites written and performed by Annie Dearman and Steve Harrison, with the help of a local narrator. It was given one performance at the Queen Victoria in Stroud to a packed audience and Annie and Steve, who came down especially from Yorkshire, generously waived their fee. The set of spinning mules that had regularly been demonstrated at Stanley Mill were removed and stored for future use thanks to funding from Renishaw. Activities in the community included work in schools on felt making and the census, workshops on warping and dying and Ian Mackintosh led seven walks and gave ten talks. One current project in hand is the redesign and updating of the website.

This has proved to be a not just a busy year but a momentous one for the Trust. We received an offer of the use of one of the 18th century mill buildings at Longfords for development as a textile centre at a peppercorn rent. We were fortunate enough to qualify for a grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund and also one from Stroud District Council. This enabled us to commission a feasibility study from RIBA Stirling Prize winning architects Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios. Preliminary findings on the state of the building were very reassuring. This is only the start of what will be an exciting but very demanding time, during which decisions will have to be taken about the proposed centre and what form it should take. Assuming the project does appear feasible, once all the facts and options have been thoroughly studied, there will need to be a major fund raising campaign. The Trustees will be consulting with the membership throughout these processes and will be looking for their views and active participation in the coming year.

Anthony Burton
17/9/2013