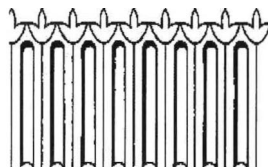


PAST PRESENT FUTURE



The Newsletter of
**West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust
and Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust
and The City of Wolverhampton Regenerating Buildings
Preservation Trust**

LATE SPRING 2017



**WEAVERS' COTTAGES, HORSEFAIR, KIDDERMINSTER:
A SPECIAL EDITION TO CELEBRATE THE COMPLETION OF
THE WORCESTERSHIRE BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST PROJECT**

Company Offices: Adam House, Birmingham Road, Kidderminster, Stourbridge DY10 2SH
Registered Company No. 1876294 Registered Charity No. 516158 VAT Registration No. 669 8183 73

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

Page |

THIS SPECIAL CELEBRATION ISSUE OF OUR NEWSLETTER GIVES A HISTORY OF THE PROJECT, BASED ON THE REPORTS OF OUR PROJECT ORGANISER, DAVID TREVIS-SMITH, WHICH HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN PAST NEWSLETTERS SINCE THE PROJECT'S INCEPTION. THIS ACCOUNT IS INTERSPERSED WITH OTHER REPORTS ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT PUBLISHED THROUGHOUT ITS COURSE.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WEAVERS' COTTAGES

Kidderminster's weaving did not begin with carpets. As far back as the 1600s Kidderminster had a thriving spinning and cloth weaving industry. There was a good climate in the river valley, a good supply of water and plenty of wool from the sheep on the surrounding hills. Around 1700, before the canal was built, there were around 400 hand looms in homes all around the town.

The quality of all cloth sold in the area was controlled by the Society of Weavers, which issued a seal of approval for each piece. These master weavers also controlled the training given to apprentices and journeymen, who had to weave for seven years before they were allowed to own a loom.

Many different fabrics with strange and wonderful names were woven on these hand looms, but Kidderminster became known particularly for its Bombazine – an

expensive material woven from silk and worsted yarns. Bombazine was generally black and used for mourning, though there are a few samples of brighter colours in the collection at the Museum of Carpet. Bombazine hand looms were small and could easily be built in a high loft in people's houses.

Following a campaign by Kidderminster Civic Society, the cottages were Listed Grade II in 2000 as *“three houses with attic workshops dating from the mid and late 18th century with later alterations”*, and the List description adds that *“these buildings, which combine domestic and workshop functions, are rare survivals from the period associated with the domestic worsted weaving industry in Kidderminster”*.

It is very likely that 22 Horsefair, built before 1753, was originally designed as a dwelling with a handloom workshop above. The other two cottages were built slightly later without the distinctive high loft workshop, but they were certainly homes built for artisans, with trades ranging from confectionery to shoemaking. There is evidence that three members of the Slade family lived in Horsefair and worked as weavers between 1757 and 1803 and, later, 22 was occupied by tailors and carpet weavers but we hope that more research will unearth further details.

The buildings are modest in scale and sat almost unnoticed amidst

more modern buildings in Horsefair, attention drawn more by their derelict condition than their significance to the history of the town. However, number 22 in particular is a very rare example of an early weaver's cottage, of much more than local interest.

SPRING 2011

Weavers' Cottages, Horsefair, Kidderminster are Listed Grade II and are currently owned by a Housing Association. The Association has built new affordable housing units on adjoining land but has encountered problems incorporating into the scheme the historic buildings, which had been seriously neglected and abandoned.

After an unsuccessful attempt to demolish the buildings, and following support from English Heritage and the Housing Association, West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT) commissioned an appraisal to establish whether a viable scheme and sufficient funding could be achieved to secure their future.

The study showed that the buildings were of considerable significance and that no. 22 in particular was an extremely rare survivor of an early- to mid-18th century artisan's house. It concluded that the cottages could be brought back into a viable

residential use, while retaining the basic plan form and room use, adding rear extensions to accommodate kitchens, bathrooms and toilets to meet current standards.

Based on this preliminary report, an application was made to the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) for grant assistance to develop the project, including the preparation and submission of a first-round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This application was successful and now enables the HLF submission.

SUMMER 2011

Meetings and discussions have been held with various interested parties including Wyre Forest Community Housing (WFCH), Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC), English Heritage and HLF, to establish the basis of moving ahead with the project. Those discussions are nearing a conclusion and it is anticipated that an announcement will shortly be issued by WMHBT and WFCH.

PRESS RELEASE 5th SEPTEMBER 2011

Historic Buildings Trust looks at feasibility of redeveloping "Weavers' Cottages", Horsefair, Kidderminster

An Options Appraisal of the Weavers' Cottages, Horsefair,

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

Kidderminster has recently been commissioned by the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT). Funding and support for this appraisal has been provided by English Heritage and the owners, Wyre Forest Community Housing (WFCH). The support provided first stage funding to enable more detailed funding bids to be put together.

Numbers 20, 21 and 22 Horsefair, known locally as the "Weavers' Cottages" are listed Grade II and owned by Wyre Forest Community Housing, which has recently redeveloped the surrounding site to provide social housing.



The study has confirmed that No 22 is a very rare survivor of an early- to mid-18th century artisan's house.

The buildings are in a state of disrepair and the feasibility work is to look at the potential to raise funds for their repair and long term conservation. WFCH has agreed to work with WMHBT whilst it develops its proposals. WMHBT is able to obtain financial assistance from

various sources, which would not generally be available to commercial organisations, particularly the Architectural Heritage Fund, which can provide project development grants and working capital loans to encourage implementation.

The Options Appraisal fully assessed current condition, offered guidance on necessary future works and maintenance and developed five Design Options. The preferred option would conserve as much of the fabric as possible, retain basic plan form and room use, and add rear extensions to accommodate kitchens, bathrooms and WCs to meet current standards, returning them to a viable residential use.

WMHBT plans to work with local schools to explore issues of Historic Buildings At Risk using 20-22 Horsefair as a case study. The Options Appraisal includes an important Education Resource Proposal setting out how this might be achieved.

The Trust would dispose of the properties at the completion of the building contract but, on the basis of current cost and income predictions, there is likely to be an overall funding deficit which will require grant support. WMHBT therefore intends to pursue funding possibilities and support from the owners, the Local Planning Authority and other key stakeholders for the conservation of the Weavers' Cottages. It is anticipated that the project will take approximately four

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

years to secure the future of the buildings.

WINTER 2011-12

The HLF application was submitted in December and requests funding towards developing detailed proposals and obtaining planning permission and Listed Building Consent to carry out repairs to the cottages, to convert to modern-day residential use, and to produce an Activity Plan of heritage-based learning activities that could be associated with such a project.

Given that WMHBT merged with the Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust (WBPT) in 2011, the grant application has been submitted in the name of WBPT.

SPRING 2012

The Trusts were delighted to learn that the First Round Heritage Grant application to HLF was successful. A grant of £64,500.00 towards an initial cost of £76,627.00 will enable us to re-commission our professional team whose services were competitively tendered for the Options Appraisal, the basis of the project documentation so far.

As well as appointing Architects, Structural Engineers and Quantity Surveyors, to undertake a measured survey and submit applications for planning

permission and Listed Building Consent, we hope now to appoint a Project Organiser.

We also intend to carry out further historic building research and need to prepare an Activity Plan of learning and participation activities based on the heritage story associated with the cottages.

There will be an opportunity for Trust members to visit the Cottages and hopefully contribute to the preliminary project stages, as they did during the early days of The Harris and Pearson Building Project.



SUMMER 2012

The project is making steady progress through the HLF supported project development phase. The project team is looking to create volunteer opportunities during both this phase of work and in the delivery

phase including work parties on site, helping to host consultation and open day events and helping create and maintain a FaceBook page about the project. Volunteer time is a vital ingredient within our projects, as it can be converted into a cash equivalent and thereby forms a key part of the grant funding provided by HLF; it also provides a practical demonstration of community participation and support for the project, which strengthens funding bids.

AUTUMN 2012

The project continues to make steady progress through the HLF supported project development phase and a dedicated website and FaceBook pages have been designed and published, which provide regular updates about the project.

In addition, the Trust's heritage interpretation consultant organised two public events towards preparation of a heritage-based Activity Plan, the purpose of which will be to provide ways for people to learn about the heritage importance of the Weavers' Cottages.

The public meetings recorded overwhelming support for saving the cottages and the vast majority of those attending were also in favour of the cottages having a community use.

The ideas generated by the public events are being explored by the project team, although relevant approvals would be required and ongoing financial viability will need to be demonstrated if the end-use is to be anything other than residential.

In October Trustees and members of the professional team carried out a preliminary work party on site to begin the process of tidying-up and to prepare for a series of volunteer work parties during the course of the project.



*Weavers' Cottages Work Party
October 2012*

Thanks to a successful grant application to the AHF under their "cold spots" funding for industrial heritage, the development phase is now fully funded (subject to recording sufficient volunteer time).

Attention now turns to applying to potential funding sources for the project delivery phase.

WINTER 2012-13

The HLF supported project development phase of the proposal has been completed (subject to the installation of information panels on site) and the Heritage Grant second-round application submitted.

SPRING 2013

The HLF has now approved the Heritage Grant second-round application with a grant offer of up to £730,000.00 towards overall project costs estimated to be around £1,105,000.00. This means WBPT is close to the point of being able to deliver the project.



*Temporary information banners now
installed on the site*

A small band of volunteers is working on smaller grant bids to provide the partnership funding needed to match that from HLF and a working capital loan application is being prepared for submission to the AHF. Once the

balance of grant funding and loan finance is secured, WBPT can press the “start” button.

In addition to saving the cottages and providing them with a new lease of life, the project also involves working with local groups, particularly Kidderminster Civic Society, colleges, schools, and the local authority in developing a wide range of activities aimed at recalling the heritage stories and social history associated with these cottages.

**HLF PRESS RELEASE:
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER
2013**

Lottery cash to save historic weavers' cottages

The WBPT has received a confirmed grant of £730,000.00 from the HLF towards costs to save the Weavers' Cottages in Kidderminster, it was announced today.

The cottages are examples of combined workshops and houses associated with worsted production, which pre-dated growth of the carpet industry and are unique survivors of this part of Kidderminster's industrial heritage. In addition to providing a new lease of life for these cottages as unique places to live, there will be volunteering opportunities for people to get involved in protecting, conserving and learning about their associated heritage stories.

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

Known locally as the Weavers' Cottages, nos 20 – 22 Horsefair are seriously 'at risk', having been derelict for many years. Grade II listed because of their importance to the history of Kidderminster, background research carried out during the planning of this rescue scheme has identified that the earliest cottage is believed to have been constructed c1709.

The cottages therefore span over 300 years of Kidderminster's history, with many stories to tell about changes from a rural to an industrial town.

The project will see these buildings refurbished to current domestic standards, with minimum intervention and maximum retention of historic fabric. Where this is not possible, new materials will match the existing, with these buildings then having a secure future as sustainable dwellings. Most importantly, they will survive as a physical link to the town's heritage, to help inform present and future generations.

The trust is working closely with other local heritage groups including the Kidderminster Civic Society and Kidderminster Museum of Carpet, and with schools and colleges, developing an exciting programme of activities to bring alive the social history of Kidderminster, its evolution as an industrial town and the important contribution that our historic built environment can make to local communities.

A wide-range of heritage-based activities will take place during the consolidation works to the cottages, including open days to see work in progress, projects involving local schools, and opportunities to learn about building conservation skills. There will be opportunities for volunteers to get involved and students within heritage education will be encouraged to develop interpretation and educational resources for the wider audience.

Bob Tolley, Chairman of WBPT, said: “We're delighted that the HLF has given us this grant and I am particularly pleased, having lived for most of my life in the Kidderminster area. The oldest of the cottages has been a part of the Kidderminster landscape for the past 300 years, and it's great to know that we are a step closer to preserving these important buildings for people to be able to appreciate now and in the decades to come”.

Reyahn King, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: “These Grade II listed weavers' cottages in Kidderminster are of exceptional heritage importance. It is Lottery investment like this that gives a new lease of life to buildings that form the historic fabric of our towns and cities, and we are delighted to be able to help the trust save them for future generations”.

Yvonne Leishman, Managing Director of the current owners Wyre Forest Community Housing, added: “We are pleased that the

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

trust has been able to secure the HLF grant, and will continue to support the trust in bringing about the refurbishment as soon as possible”.

The WBPT is aiming to be ready to invite tenders for the building work early next year, with work on site starting Summer 2014. The cottages are expected to be ready for new owners to move in by the end of next year.

SPRING 2014

The WBPT is busy making preparations for the up and coming start date for the project. In particular, the project steering group has arranged that volunteer work parties are to re-commence and we anticipate that many of our members will be eager to get involved to help clear the site.

In addition, work is in progress to appoint an Activities Coordinator to implement a structured scheme of activities, involving local groups, colleges and schools in learning about and getting involved with the local heritage stories, social history and traditional building materials and techniques associated with these cottages.

AUTUMN 2014

The legal process of transfer of ownership to the Trust is making slow progress but arrangements

have been agreed in principle to gain site access so that the architects can carry out up-to-date surveys of the cottages in order to prepare their detail design work.

WINTER 2014-15

Whilst the legal process of arranging the transfer of ownership to the Trust is being progressed, the agreement with the owners for site access is now operational and the architects, Rodney Melville & Partners, are able to carry out up-to-date surveys of the cottages in order to prepare their detailed design work. It also means the Trust can re-start volunteer work parties to clear undergrowth and generally tidy-up the site.

SPRING 2015

Rodney Melville & Partners are making good progress with preparing detailed designs required to invite tenders for the building work. Provided tenders are within budget, the Trust will be able to let the contract with the aim of starting work on site towards the end of this year.

Meanwhile, three new secure doors have been fitted to the cottages and the Trust has re-started volunteer work parties to clear undergrowth and generally tidy-up the site.

SUMMER 2015

Our architects, Rodney Melville & Partners, have completed the detailed design drawings and Schedule of Work; these are with our quantity surveyors, Austin Newport, to prepare the Bill of Quantities and other documentation to issue invitations to tender for the building work. Provided tenders are within budget, the Trust will be able to let the contract with the aim of starting work on site towards the end of this year.



Work Party Summer 2015

AUTUMN 2015

Architects, Rodney Melville & Partners, and quantity surveyors, Austin Newport, are in the process of appraising six tenders received for the building contract. Preliminary indications are that the tenders are within budget which, if subsequently confirmed, is fantastic news as it will mean the Trust can let the contract for work to start on site early in the new year.

WINTER 2015-16

The architects and quantity surveyors for this project have completed their appraisal of the six tenders received for the building contract, which confirmed that the tenders were within budget. This meant the Trust could let the building contract, once it actually owned the property.

The purchase was completed on 23rd December 2015 and this enabled Rodney Melville & Partners to be authorised to let the building contract and the preferred tenderer, Croft Building and Conservation Ltd, started on site on 1st February 2016. Work is expected to reach practical completion by the end of this year.



An impression of Weavers' Cottages on completion of the work

Project funding is primarily an HLF grant and an AHF loan, the latter to be repaid by the proceeds

of selling the cottages on completion of the capital works.

Ian Parkin and his Associate, Sue Pope, are planning implementation of the Activity Plan as the building works timetable is now confirmed.

AUTUMN 2016

Removing the cement render created a challenge in that sections of the front wall decided they would prefer a horizontal position closer to the road rather than the vertical position they had held for almost 300 years!

The skills of the design team were put to the test, particularly our structural engineer Steve Mason, architects David Cattell and Heather Temple and the contractors, and all passed with flying colours as the buildings were stabilised and without any need to re-apply external render. This caused a few delays to the programme but, even so, work is still expected to reach practical completion by early next year.

**WEAVERS' COTTAGES:
A TASTE OF POINTING
BRICKWORK IN LIME
MORTAR**

On the 17th June 2016, in collaboration with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), building contractors Croft Building and Conservation Ltd opened up the building site at Weavers' Cottages in Horsefair, Kidderminster for a day to instruct and advise on the use of lime in historic building construction.



A group photograph of those involved on the day

The SPAB Maintenance Co-operative project exists to empower volunteers at places of worship across Herefordshire and Worcestershire to understand their traditionally built buildings and take on basic maintenance tasks to ensure these buildings remain in good condition for years to come.

With several Co-operative churches built of brick and it being essential to carry out repairs using traditional materials, the chance to learn how to repoint brickwork in lime has been a regular request from Co-operative volunteers.

Whilst not a church, the same skills are being applied at the Weavers' Cottages to match the type of lime mortar used when the cottages were originally constructed and this provided an ideal learning opportunity. Volunteers from churches in the Kidderminster area were also keen to get behind the scenes, take a tour of the site and have a chance to see a live building conservation project at work.

Seven people were able to take part in the training day at the cottages, ably led by staff from Croft and organised by Kate Andrew (SPAB project officer for Herefordshire and Worcestershire) and Andrew Mottram from Worcester Diocese.

Kate said: "Working on a live conservation building site and carrying out work that could well be in place for at least a century was a very special opportunity for both the volunteers and myself. Making sure everything was in place to allow the training to happen safely and effectively required a lot of careful planning but paid off with a superb day that everyone learnt from and enjoyed".

Andy Hutchings from Croft said: "We at Croft Building and Conservation Ltd are very happy to show our skills and hopefully pass on a small amount of this to help others understand the nature of our work, enabling them to carry out the skills they learnt on their own and various other buildings".

Bob Tolley, past Trust Chairman and accredited Conservation Architect, said: "The use of traditional building materials has long been recognised as an important element in good historic building repair practice and the WBPT always endeavours to ensure that these practices are followed in all projects.

"Encouraging the use of such materials as lime is an essential aspect in repairs we undertake, using wherever possible Building Contractors experienced in the use of traditional techniques, which is why we have supported the recent SPAB initiative".

**WEAVERS' COTTAGES
OPEN DAY:
SATURDAY 6th
AUGUST 2016**



Weavers' Cottages Open Day

On Saturday 6th August, on probably one of the hottest days of the year so far, Trust members and guests descended on the site to see

first hand how the work was progressing.

There was clear evidence of the Trust's involvement, even before you entered the site, with an interpretation panel on land opposite the cottages.



The "Horses and Handlooms" interpretation panel

This had been installed by the Trust quite early in the life of the project and describes how the Horse Fair moved to this area from the Town Centre in 1690 and remained there for 130 years, until it began to be developed with businesses such as tailors, grocers, shoemakers, brewers and, of course, weavers.

In view of the very limited area of the site itself, numbers who could be admitted at any one time were necessarily limited and booking of time-slots for each visitor was essential, but there were nevertheless 68 bookings and, inevitably, other unscheduled visits from passers-by, who saw that something was happening and wanted to find out more.

Each group assembled at the entrance to the site, to be greeted by the event organiser and self-styled “shoe police”, Sue Pope from Parkin Heritage and Tourism, who are the Activity Plan Co-ordinators for the project. Sue’s first task was to check that all visitors were wearing suitably robust footwear for a working building site and, where necessary, providing appropriate alternatives!

Next the Trust’s Project Organiser, David Trevis-Smith, introduced the project with the rather alarming assertion – one which he was repeating from a number of other disaffected commentators – that it would actually be cheaper to knock the buildings down and build some nice new ones!



Project Organiser David Trevis-Smith introduces the project to open day visitors

However, that would not of course be appropriate for these important historic buildings, which were of much more than just local interest, and he went on to describe the rationale behind the Building Preservation Trust’s involvement.

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

He was also able to explain, in part at least, the reason for the high cost of the project, if only in terms of the number of different specialist skills and trades involved, which included roofers, bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters, stonemasons and blacksmiths amongst others. Then, following a briefing on site safety from Andy Hutchings, the site manager from Croft Building and Conservation Ltd of Cannock, we were let loose.

As in the case of the WMHBT open day at The Thomas Robinson Building Crofts, who had also been the main contractors there, laid on a series of demonstrations of some of the skills involved in the project.

Croft’s bricklayer was demonstrating traditional bricklaying techniques using lime mortar, and showing the different types of brick bonding which could be found in historic buildings, and the proprietor of A J Mugridge from Madeley in Shropshire was demonstrating traditional brick-making techniques.



Brickmaker A J Mugridge makes new bricks with two of his younger helpers

In many cases, visitors were allowed and indeed encouraged to join in with the activities although it is unclear as to how many of their products will actually find their way into the finished building!

Croft’s leadworkers, who had already been involved in providing roof and chimney flashings, were showing how to construct a typical rainwater hopper head in lead.



Croft’s leadworker shows how to make a lead hopper head (above) and (below) a blacksmith from Ashmore Conservation makes a new wall plate



Representatives from Ashmore Conservation (blacksmiths) were fabricating the S-shaped wall plates which are attached to the external elevations of the building to hold in place the tie-rods which pass through the building and provide structural support.

Those who wanted to see more detail of the work in the cottages themselves were then treated to a tour of accessible parts of the buildings under the guidance of Andy Hutchings.



Visitors on top of the scaffolding at Weavers’ Cottages

In view of the strict constraints of the site, groups were limited to around five or six people but this meant, of course, that visitors could view everything in much closer detail and ask many more questions of our expert guide.

The ground floor interiors of numbers 20 and 22 and all levels of the external scaffolding were accessible and it was particularly interesting to have a close view of the upper parts of the building, and especially the roofs and chimneys, of

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

which you would normally only have a distant view from ground level.

Chimneys had been repaired or rebuilt and some had been lined so that they were capable of use. The slate roofs of numbers 20 and 21 and the plain clay tiled roof of number 22 had been stripped and these were in the process of being re-laid.



The clay tiled roof and chimney at number 22 in the course of repair

Around 75% of the original slates and 85% of the original clay tiles had been salvaged for re-use; new slates had been obtained from the Penrhyn quarry in Wales and new clay tiles were hand-made to order by Tudor Tiles and, as the roofs were being re-laid, the new slates and tiles were being distributed evenly across the roofs to avoid a patchy appearance.

One original cast iron gutter bracket had been recovered and this was duly despatched to the blacksmith

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

for 30 copies to be made. The external brickwork had been rendered some time in the middle of the 20th century and there was much debate about whether to try to remove the render and restore the original brick finish.

Trials were undertaken and it proved unusually easy to remove the render, partly because some areas of "render" proved to be no more than interior plaster and partly – and crucially – because the surface of the brickwork had not been roughened (often carried out by hitting the face of the brickwork with a hammer) to provide a key for the render.



Visitors inspect the external brickwork from which the render has been removed

The individual bricks were therefore generally found to be in good condition although some areas of brickwork were unsound and had to be carefully taken down and rebuilt.

One of the surprise finds, when the render was removed, was a large painted sign on the front elevation stating **A. Wakefield Confectioner** and thought to date from the 1920s.

It was not uncommon at that time for buildings to carry general advertising material, not necessarily related to the activities being undertaken within the actual building, and it was not therefore clear whether this sign had anything to do with Weavers' Cottages – not clear, that is, until the Wakefields' granddaughter appeared at the open day and confirmed that her grandmother did indeed operate a sweet shop from the building!



The original fireplace and quarry tiled floor at number 20

Some work had been undertaken on the interiors, including repairs to an unusual elm staircase and original fireplaces. An original quarry tiled floor had been found in number 20 and was being retained and restored.

After the tour of Weavers' Cottages, visitors had the opportunity to join a short heritage walk around Kidderminster, finishing at The Carpet Museum, where free refreshments were available, along with the opportunity to meet family historian, Gay Hill, and Paul Hudson from Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service.

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

Gay had organised a number of Family History sessions as part of the Activity Plan and she had obtained copies of extracts from past censuses from Horsefair. They showed amongst other things that, in 1871, the head of the household at number 22 was Robert Harden and that other residents were his widowed sister-in-law, Harriet, who was described as "housekeeper" and his nephew, who was described as a "creeler". In the textile industry, a creel is a rack that holds spools of thread or yarn and a creeler tends to this piece of equipment to ensure there is a continuous supply of yarn – it was good to see that the link with the weaving industry continued!

WEAVERS' COTTAGES PROVIDE WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Two 16 and 17 year old students from Kidderminster have joined the team at Croft Building and Conservation Ltd on a work experience placement at Weavers' Cottages. Courtney Chapple and Frankie Green, who study bricklaying at Stourbridge College, have been spending two days a week on the site and have been given their own jobs to do, repairing brickwork in one of the chimneys.

Site manager for Crofts, Andy Hutchings, has been mentoring the students and says that they tackled

the task “brilliantly”, adding that “as individuals just beginning their training, they have already gained valuable industry knowledge and developed skills that place them ahead of the game in terms of their professional progress”.



Courtney Chapple and Frankie Green with Trustee Nigel Brown (far right) and site foreman Andy Hutchings

Courtney and Frankie will continue their studies at Stourbridge College in September where new construction and built environment facilities will be available to full-time students and apprentices.

“This is my first time working on a building project and it’s just as good as I expected it to be” said Courtney. “Frankie and I have grown up in the area so we’ve seen how Horsefair has changed over the years. It’s a huge deal for us to be involved in these developments and be part of the cottages’ history”.

“We’re learning a lot,” added Frankie. “Everyone at the site has told us we’re part of the team now,

so we’re also spending the summer working here. It’s a brilliant start to our CVs”. Trustee Nigel Brown added: “Providing young people with hands on experience of building restoration ensures these specialist skills are not lost and that other buildings can be preserved in future”.

HERITAGE TASTER DAYS

As part of the project, two “Heritage Taster Days” have been organised by the Trust’s Project Activity Co-ordinator, Sue Pope.

In “A Taste of Words”, on 20th October 2016, poet, singer and historian Heather Wastie will explore the art of poetry writing using the social history of Kidderminster for inspiration.



Heather Wastie

Participants will be supported to develop their own pieces, the best of which may be used as part of the final project celebrations.

In “A Taste of Hand Loom Weaving”, on 22nd October 2016, weaver Roger Mathews will demonstrate weaving on a hand loom.



Weaver Roger Mathews

WINTER 2016-17

The building contract period has been extended due to the need for more re-plastering than anticipated and recent weather conditions have also slowed the rate at which the traditional lime plaster has been drying. This follows the extension to the contract programme made necessary by the unavoidable rebuild of the front wall of Number 22 and of part of the front wall of Number 21, as previously reported. The bricks were carefully taken down, cleaned and re-assembled - a process that was particularly challenging to ensure the remnants of the hand-painted “Confectioners” sign was returned to its faded but legible state on the front of Number 21, the middle of the three cottages.

Now the major structural works are done and other significant items are reasonably close to being completed (e.g. plastering), the project steering group is turning its attention to preparations for marketing the cottages for sale, likely to start in late February or early March.

HAPPY HORSEFAIR CHRISTMAS EVENT: 3rd DECEMBER 2016

The Happy Horsefair Christmas event was organised by the “Horsefair and Proud” group, which had itself been established as part of the “Big Local DY10” project. “Big Local” is a new opportunity, funded by The Big Lottery Fund, under which a grant of around a million pounds is made available over 10 years to each of 150 communities in the most deprived areas across the country.

The DY10 project covers parts of the neighbourhoods of Broadwaters, Greenhill and Horsefair in Kidderminster and a partnership of local people has been formed to develop the Big Local Community Plan and oversee its implementation. Grants of up to £1,000.00 are available for individuals and up to £2,000.00 for organisations for projects which benefit the local area.

The Christmas event included Santa’s Grotto, the Salvation Army

Band, carol singing, tombola and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service.



Santa inspects the WBPT's interpretation panel at The Happy Horsefair Christmas Event

Fortunately, the Trust was also able to have a presence, thanks largely to Activity Plan Co-ordinator, Sue Pope, who provided a "pop-up" gazebo with details of the project, flyers and membership application forms.



The Trust's gazebo with Weavers' Cottages behind

Sue and her ukulele also joined forces with poet, singer and historian, Heather Wastie and her piano accordion, performing new

songs which had been inspired by the cottages and the weaving industry. Local resident, Maggie Doyle, also read poems written by her and Kathy Gee on the same themes, which had been developed in the Heritage Taster Day, A Taste of Words.



Sue, Heather and Maggie entertain with words and music

SPRING 2017

Humid weather conditions over the past few months have slowed the rate at which the traditional lime plaster has been drying.

Thankfully the situation has improved with recent drier weather and the building contractors now predict reaching practical completion at Easter.

Preparations for marketing the cottages for sale are being finalised and are likely to start in mid-April.

It is intended to request best and final offers as sealed bids, to be

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

submitted by a specified date, likely to be towards the end of May 2017.

If you know someone who might be interested in acquiring one of these beautifully refurbished cottages, now is the time to contact the agents!



The new rear extensions at Weavers' Cottages

WEAVERS' COTTAGES FINAL OPEN DAY REPORT: 11th MARCH 2017

Saturday the 11th March 2017 saw what will probably be the final opportunity for Trust Members and friends to see the results of the project by Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust at Weavers' Cottages, Kidderminster before the buildings are offered for sale.

The day was not sunny but the temperatures were mild and the weather was mercifully dry, which was perfect for the large numbers of

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

visitors who had applied to be part of this heavily over-subscribed event.



The final Weavers' Cottages Open Day

In view of the serious limitations on space at the cottages themselves, tours had to be pre-booked and it had originally been proposed that there would be five guided tours throughout the day with a maximum of ten visitors at any one time. However, so many people were eager to view the cottages that the size of each tour was enlarged to fifteen, with all the extra places still being booked almost as soon as they were announced.

The starting point for all of the activities was the Salvation Army Centre in Jerusalem Walk - a three minute walk away from the cottages - and the front railings of the Centre were, in honour of the occasion, adorned with weavings made by students in workshops in Kidderminster Carpet Museum.

Arrival times were staggered, to coincide with the times of the individual tours, and once each group was signed in, there was an

introductory talk by our Project Organiser or one of the Trustees before the group was led to the cottages.



The Salvation Army Centre with adorned front railing (above) and (below) Project Organiser David Trevis-Smith prepares to lead a group of visitors from The Salvation Army Centre to the cottages



The ground floors of numbers 20 and 21 were accessible to visitors but all three floors of number 22 were available to those who were brave and fit enough to tackle the stairs, which are rather challenging, particularly at the upper level! Andy Hutchings, site manager for the principal contractors, Croft Building and Conservation Ltd of Cannock,

was on hand to help with the guiding and to answer questions.

At the time of the previous open day, on 6th August 2016, the principal repairs to the original cottages were largely complete but they had now been fully fitted, ready for occupation, with only minor works and decorations remaining to be completed.



The interior ground floor of no. 22

The principal change this time was the new extensions, of a mix of one and two storeys, which accommodate bathrooms, kitchens and bin stores. They had only just started to come out of the ground on the previous occasion but they are now also virtually finished, although external works and boundary treatments remain to be completed.

One of the major problems in projects of this type is to accommodate, to modern standards, all of the services which prospective purchasers will expect. However, with the bathrooms and kitchens in the extensions, it means that the vast majority of the services are

contained in the modern elements and the services are therefore provided with minimal damage to the character and fabric of the historic buildings.



Part of the restored interior

One of the many delights of the tour was to find, in the weaver's workshop on the second floor of number 22, a ... weaver! Roger Mathews from Kidderminster Carpet Museum had set up his sixty year old Harris Loom there and was demonstrating the manufacture of *Kidderminster Stuffe*.

Kidderminster was probably most famous for the production (mainly between 1780 and 1840) of *Bombazine*, which was a high quality fabric of worsted and silk or cotton, usually black and used mainly for mourning clothes. However, the production of *Stuffe* – a coarse, thickly woven cloth used for furniture fabric, wall hangings, rugs and heavy-duty clothing – has a much longer heritage in the town and it is recorded as being used as a backdrop for one of Shakespeare's plays in the original Globe Theatre in

Southwark, London in the early 17th century.



Weaver Roger Mathews shows his "Stuffe" to visitors

There were plenty of other activities for visitors to enjoy throughout the course of the day, before or after their tours. These included displays by Kidderminster Civic Society, Kidderminster Museum of Carpet, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, the "Horsefair and Proud" Group and The Friends of St George's Park as well as information about Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust; West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust; the project architects; and the principal contractors.



The Salvation Army Centre Displays

As part of the project Activity Plan, students on the Games Design Level 3 BTEC Course at Kidderminster College developed a series of computer games with a weaving theme, suitable for primary school children, and there was also an opportunity at the open day for the many young visitors to test their skills.



Younger visitors test their skills on the Kidderminster College computer games

In addition, there was also a programme of talks and presentations throughout the day including an account of the project by former Trust Chairman, Bob Tolley; details of the development and genealogy of the area by Gay Hill and Caroline O'Callaghan; and a series of poems and songs led by Heather Wastie.

As another part of the Activity Plan, Heather had undertaken a series of workshops with children from nearby St Mary's Primary School and local aspiring poets; together they had produced a cycle of poems and songs inspired by Kidderminster's weaving industry and by the

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

Confectioners which the project revealed had once occupied the cottage at number 21.

Heather and her accordion were joined by Activity Plan Co-ordinator, Sue Pope, with her ukelele, and by poets Margaret E Green and Sharon Cartwright to perform some of the works which had been produced in this context.



Sue, Margaret, Sharon and Heather entertain visitors with songs and poems

Two of the poems are reproduced below and it is hoped that a book and CD will follow, so look for details in future editions of this Newsletter.

A visitor feedback survey was carried out at the event and comments included the following:

- "thank you to all volunteers for a very interesting morning. Well organised very friendly and welcoming";
- "an amazing and sympathetic restoration";

- "really interesting and also good to see other local exhibitions";
- "a very interesting visit with knowledgeable and helpful staff and volunteers";
- "the preservation work is amazing";
- "well worth the effort of coming"; and
- "thank you for a fascinating event".



The Trust would like to offer its grateful thanks to all those whose invaluable assistance helped to make this such a successful event. There are far too many to name individually but special mention must be made of Activity Plan Co-ordinator, Sue Pope, who managed to bring together all the people and events so effectively.

WEAVERS' COTTAGES POETRY WORKSHOPS

WMHBT, WBPT and COWRBPT LATE SPRING 2017

The Trusts are delighted to be able to reproduce, in this Newsletter, two of the poems which were written about Weavers' Cottages in the course of poetry workshops which were run as part of the project Activity Plan.

The first relates to the time when the cottages were actually occupied by weavers. The second relates to the fact that one of the cottages (in the first half of the 20th century) was in use as a sweet shop, as evidenced by a painted sign which was discovered on the brickwork of number 21 when the render was removed.

The sign says *A WAKEFIELD CONFECTIONER* and it was unclear at the time the poem was written whether the proprietor was a man or woman. However, the participants decided on **Mrs** Wakefield for the purposes of the workshop and, thankfully, this was confirmed as Mrs Arthur Wakefield when her granddaughter appeared at a subsequent open day!

TOP TO BOTTOM

Second storey windows.

Light for the making.

*Light on rapid fingers,
twilling silk and wool.*

*Sharp eyes to make
best bombazine*

for wealthy widows

wearing crucifixes
weighed with sorrow.
Down the staircase,
shadows sleep together.
Some will die too young
to learn the weaving,
dream of service,
inheriting a widow's
cast-off weeds,
to wear with pride
and tinplate fairings.
Ground floor – fire
when there are wages,
cold when windows flap
with sacking, darkness
lit by an open door.
In bad times, hardship
haunts the room, leaves
little for their bread,
potatoes, tea and gin.
The women call
on Spanish priests
who buy their cloth,
send whispered prayers
for 'light that shineth
in the darkness'.

Kathy Gee

THE SWEET SHOP

*Her children were borrowed.
Each day, after school, the shop bell
jangled
and for ten minutes her front room
was
filled with laughter. Child after child
pointing chalky fingers at the sight of
glass jars, promising hidden delights,
standing to attention on wooden
shelves.
Smells of syrup and strawberries
mingled
with dust as boys and girls tingled
when
sherbet dips hit lips. Love Hearts
and Violets
squashed together in the "tupenny
drawer"
fruit salad chews and Bobos in the
ha'penny one.
Coconut ice, Spanish Gold, liquorice,
were lit
by the sun that streamed through
onto
faded carpet where faded dreams of
family
became reality for ten minutes every
day.*

Maggie Doyle

November 2016.

RECORDING THE WEAVERS' COTTAGES, 20-23 HORSEFAIR, KIDDERMINSTER



The Weavers' Cottages need to be seen within the context of development and change within Kidderminster.

The town's cloth trade is developed apace after the 1533 Worcestershire Cloth Act freed up the trade. By the 17th century, the trade in a fabric called Kidderminster stuff provided widespread employment, though the living was said to be modest. Within the later 18th century the town increasingly became known for the production of a finer fabric called Bombazine.

Cloth production was a cottage industry requiring a specific building form, of which number 22 is the only remaining example in Kidderminster. It is outwardly a normal domestic brick building, but the relatively large second floor windows betray its use

and would have lit a large open attic space. A large, high ceilinged and well-lit space was designed to accommodate the hand looms and work of a weaver and his family, as illustrated in the two images below.



From William Hogarth Industry and Idleness 1747

Two rooms on each of the ground and first floors catered for the domestic needs of the family with a living room complete with an inglenook fireplace on the ground floor and a bedroom on the first floor.

Both floors had an extra small bay, likely to be for a cold storage function. The building also had a

small cellar, accessed by a winder staircase which ran from this point to the second floor.

It is possible that number 22 was originally one of a pair as seen by a second floor internal door and a ground floor internal window or hatch. Elements of earlier brickwork remained within the later number 20, suggesting the building may have extended across the footprint of numbers 20-21.

The roof of number 22 also showed evidence of having been changed, with the purlins extended from the chimney towards the later number 23. One explanation for this may be that the roof was formerly hipped at this point but this remains open to question.



This potential pair of buildings may be those illustrated on a map of 1753 on the northern side of the Horsefair, the fabric of the building would certainly be consistent with a date within the first half of the 18th century.

The carpet industry for which the town was later famed started to develop towards the end of the 18th century and all but replaced cloth production by the 1820s and '30s. This industry required centralised, mechanised production, rendering buildings of the form of number 22 as all but obsolete.

The housing built at this time was of a domestic character, with no top storey workshops required. It is in this context that numbers 20, 21 and 23 were constructed within a style consistent with a 19th century date, and certainly constructed before a map of 1835 on which they were depicted.

Numbers 20-21 were built as a pair of contemporary cottages with single rooms on ground, first and second floors linked by an internal staircase, and each room serviced by small fireplaces. The roof is of a low pitch, making an attic workshop suitable for weaving improbable.

The census details from 1841-1901 show the occupiers of these buildings undertaking a variety of crafts and trades. In comparison to this, number 22 was occupied by three generations of a single family through much of the 19th century, all listed as tailors. It is likely they were utilising the large, well-lit attic space for professional purposes.

Number 23 was also depicted on the map of 1835, but its internal layout was changed to a large degree

within the 20th century as part of its conversion to a fish and chip shop. This included the demolition of internal fireplaces and chimney breast, along with the only remaining internal wall, which was subsequently rebuilt. Little can therefore be said about its original interior form, but its domestic use is certain.

All of numbers 20-23 were extended to their rear in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the addition of living rooms, kitchens and toilets. In the 1920s, number 21 was used by one Arthur Wakefield as a confectioner with a sign under the plaster on the front of the building and a chocolate box under the floor boards attesting to this.

The carpet industry, along with Kidderminster itself, underwent a period of decline within the latter half of the 20th century, reflected to some degree within these buildings which lay derelict for much of this period.

The buildings suffered from this dereliction with structural decay, and temporary squatter use as seen by internal graffiti. Thankfully, the rarity of and interest of these buildings has now been recognised and their future secured for generations to come.

Tim Cornah, Historic Environment and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire County Council.

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chairman: Sue Whitehouse;
Treasurer: Andrew Bradley;
Membership Secretary: Steve Mason;

Minutes Secretary: Peter Arnold;
Newsletter Editor: Nick Hogben;

Trustees: Philip Adams,
Katherine Andrew, Mark Balkham,
Ed Barron, David Bills MBE, Nigel Brown, Nick Crombie, Andy Foster,
Nick Joyce, Jayne Pilkington, John Thomas, Robert Tolley, John Woodall;

Project Organiser: David Trevis-Smith;

Company Secretary: Peter Copsey.

The photographs in this Newsletter are reproduced by kind permission of Kate Andrew, Tim Cornah, Heather Cox, Nick Hogben, Phipps & Pritchard with McCartneys, Bob Tolley, David Trevis-Smith and Sue Whitehouse.

To obtain sales particulars for the cottages, contact Nick Millinchip at Phipps & Pritchard with McCartneys Stourport-on-Severn office (email: stourport@phippsandpritchard.co.uk or telephone: 01299 822060).