



WORCESTERSHIRE
Building Preservation Trust

Weavers' Cottages throw open their doors for the last Open Day on Saturday 11th March

The Weavers' Cottages are a row of three historically important cottages, the earliest of which dates back almost 300 years. All three have been empty and unused for a generation. They are modest in scale and sat almost unnoticed amidst more modern buildings in the Horsefair, attention was drawn more by their derelict condition than their significance to the history of the town.

The Worcestershire Historic Buildings Trust would like to invite you to the last Open Day on Saturday 11th March, to view the cottages' National Lottery funded transformation, and celebrate the successful completion of the last remaining weavers' cottages in Kidderminster, into residential accommodation.

The event will invite Roger Mathews, a handloom weaver, to weave cloth in Number 22. Roger is a volunteer from The Museum of Carpet and will be the last person to weave cloth in the cottages before their sale. It is very likely that 22 Horsefair was originally designed as a dwelling with a handloom workshop above, to weave a type of cloth known as bombazine for which Kidderminster was once famous. 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 the Horsefair and worked as weavers between 1757 and 1803.

Due to the size of the cottages, access will be by timed ticket and booked in advance. Please note that ticket places will be extremely limited. To book your place please contact Activity Co-ordinator Sue Pope on: events@wbpt.org.uk or call: 07875 377243

While waiting to visit the cottages, there will be the opportunity to see the positive impact this project has had on the local community and children from nearby schools. Artwork will be presented and talks, songs, and poetry, inspired by the cottages history, will be performed at the Salvation Army Centre, Jerusalem Walk, Kidderminster between 10am – 4pm.

Further information about the project, including all project images and how to become a member of the Trust, can be found at www.weaverscottages.info

ENDS

About the Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust

The Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust, a registered charity, aims to rescue buildings 'at risk' that are of historic or architectural importance. The Trust has completed successful projects at Church House, Areley Kings; Wyre Hill, Bewdley; Belle House, Pershore; Load St, Bewdley; and The

Sargeants House, Ledbury; where sustainable uses have been found for otherwise abandoned historic properties. www.wbpt.org.uk

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. www.hlf.org.uk. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #HLFsupported.

For further information, additional images and interviews, please contact:

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About bombazine

The following is taken from R. A. Smith: "History of the Cloth Industry of Kidderminster" (1959) and Nigel Gilbert: "A History of Kidderminster" (2004) (both available in Kidderminster library).

Bombazine was a very fine silk and worsted fabric used for clothing. With its silk warp and worsted weft, it was a light and fine fabric.

R. A. Smith states that, to weave bombazine, simple and inexpensive shaft looms were used. They were light and small. It is believed that the main base for this industry in Kidderminster was in the Churchfield and Queen Street areas (Gilbert, 2004). The heyday for this trade was from the 1740s onwards (R. A. Smith, 1959).

For the most part bombazine weavers were engaged in home production. In Milk Street, off Churchfield, were a group of loom shops, most with space for four looms, owned by manufacturers, the Penn family. R. A. Smith states this was unusual and that the general rule was for weavers to own their own looms, which they used in their homes.

R. A. Smith has these figures (from T. R. Nash: "Collections for the History of Worcestershire" (1782)):

- In 1772 there were 30 manufacturers finding work for 1,700 looms in the town.
- In 1784 there were 7 manufacturers and 1,000 looms.
- By 1812 there were still 5 manufacturers and 700 looms.

With Kidderminster having become the leading centre for carpet manufacture by 1800 (Len Smith: "Carpet Weavers and Carpet Masters" (1986)), demand for bombazine declined after 1828 and no attempt was made to save the industry.



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