

Knockando Woolmill Apprenticeship Highland Society of London Focus Charity Appeal 2017



Following on from the success of last year's appeal to raise funds for the stained glass windows at the Highland Hospice, we are contacting you again with details of this year's Focus Charity Appeal. This is to fund an apprenticeship at the historic Knockando Woolmill in the Spey Valley. I referred to this at the Summer Cocktail Party and I hope you will agree with me and the Committee that this is a very worthy appeal, not only helping safeguard traditional Highland skills and culture, but something that provides a young apprentice with employment and a worthy skill which will help a Highland business to grow.

The history of the Woolmill, listed in parish records since 1784, is briefly outlined at the bottom of this e mail and I also encourage you to view their website and videos, links to which are at the foot of the e mail as they really do help to make clear why it is such a worthy cause to help guarantee the future of this extraordinary mill.

The Mill owns two historic Dobcross looms, one of which is still in working order and thought to be the oldest Dobcross loom still working in Britain, although there were once over 1,000 in existence. It is vital that the skills needed to weave on this historic machinery are passed on to the next generation, not only to bring employment to a rural area but to ensure the Mill can operate on a commercial basis.

To this end, the Mill has asked us to part fund the salary of a Craft Fellow (apprentice) for one year. The total annual cost is £20,000 and we would very much like to donate £10,000 towards this amount with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) funding the remaining amount.

The apprenticeship is vital to preserving the ability to operate this historic Highland Community Wool Mill as it enables a year of learning without impacting the Mill's ability to weave on a commercial basis, so guaranteeing the financial future of the Mill. It also provides much needed employment in a rural community.

Following their year of apprenticeship, the Craft Fellow is employed full-time by the Mill to weave on a commercial basis. The Weaver then, in turn, passes their experience to a new Craft Fellow.

The employment of Craft Fellows enables traditional craft skills to be passed on to the next generation, ensuring the future of textile production at the Woolmill as well as helping to enthuse the many visitors, both local and international, who travel to see the historic looms in action which of course helps to generate additional much needed income for the Woolmill.

To donate to this very worthy cause, as I strongly encourage you to do, please click here <https://www.justgiving.com/campaigns/charity/highlandsocietyoflondon/knockandowoolmill>. As an indication, if our Members donated an average of £75-150, we would easily raise our target but please don't feel limited to this amount!

A Brief History of the Mill

The Woolmill has always been at the heart of the local community, listed as the "Wauk Mill" in parish records from 1784 and it has since maintained its traditions of spinning and weaving through generations of families.

Spinning and weaving went hand in hand with agriculture at Knockando. There would be little work carried on in the Woolmill during sowing or harvest time but after shearing, local farmers would bring in their fleeces to be processed and take them away as blankets and tweed cloth. Many communities had their own local district woollen mill, but the majority of these disappeared between the two World Wars.

Somehow, Knockando survived. Using expertise passed down through generations, the last proprietor, Hugh Jones, learnt the craft from his predecessor, Duncan Stewart. For thirty years he continued to produce tweed, rugs and blankets on the old looms. Knockando Woolmill Trust, formed in 2000, stepped in to raise the £3.5 million needed to restore the buildings and machinery. This was completed in 2014, It now owns the mill building, leasing the rest of the site from Knockando Estate. The Woolmill is now open to the public and continues to sustain the manufacturing traditions of the UK's oldest surviving district wool mill.

For further information about the Woolmill, please click on the links below.

Thank you very much and I look forward to seeing many of you in November.

Yours aye

Duncan Byatt
President

Websites

Trust: <http://www.knockandowoolmill.org.uk>

Company: <http://www.knockandowoolmill.co.uk>

Videos

Website: <https://www.knockandowoolmill.org.uk/pages/weaving>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/knockandowoolmill/videos/>

Photos

Instagram: www.instagram.com/knockandowoolmill/?hl=en

Blog: www.knockandowoolmill.org.uk/blogs/news

Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/knockandowoolmill/albums/>