



The Laxey Woollen Mills and MostlyManx



Weaving Past and Present

Which natural fibre can be bent 20,000 times without breaking, and what links the funky 70's pop band Mungo Jerry to the textile industry?

The answers to these (see below) and many more curious questions have all cropped up during a local writer's research into the background of one of the Isle of Man's oldest continuous industries. Sue King (pictured) is currently exploring the history of the Laxey Woollen Mills, a story that goes back nearly 150 years to the 1860s. At that time a Lancashire weaver called Egbert Rydings settled in Laxey and, with support from the famous Victorian artist and writer John Ruskin, set about establishing the mill that we know today.

Sue's research has taken her deep into the archives of Manx National Heritage, the Ruskin Library in Lancaster and Brantwood, Ruskin's home in the Lake District and her findings will form the basis of a book, as well as an information display at the refurbished Mill. Sue says it has been fascinating to look into the lives of the people working in the mill as well as uncovering its strong links with Manx tourism, fashion, commerce and social upheaval. The Mill has survived many ups and downs over the years but it remains



a virtually unchanged landmark in Laxey's landscape. John Ruskin would probably also have been delighted to know that the MostlyManx concept, encouraging and supporting Manx artisans and craftspeople, is carrying on the type of work dear to his heart.

If you have any information or photographs that could help Sue expand her knowledge of the Laxey Woollen Mills please email sueking@manx.net, phone 474231 or call in to MostlyManx in Nelson Street, Douglas (behind Marks & Spencers)

ANSWERS: Wool can be bent 20,000 times without breaking. Mungo and Jerry were nineteenth century terms for poor grade woollen cloth made up of recycled yarn.



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