

Weaving Tails in Wiltshire



Andy Fish once again drove a packed minibus of members on a trip, but, to a rather more unusual destination on this occasion. Thursday 4th November, however, revealed the little known process of weaving hairs from horses' tails, using Victorian equipment, to fulfil orders for wall hangings and upholstery across the globe.

The John Boyd Textiles Factory, installed in part of the Higher Flax Mills complex at Castle Carey, proved full of fascination and delight and, after a lunch break, was followed by a drive through the countryside from north to south of the A30 to look around the South Somerset Museum in Yeovil. Martin Gregory, a HIAS member who travelled with us, has offered to write a factual report on the visit to the Horse Hair Factory which will appear in the spring issue of the HMG newsletter.

Peter Mobbs watches the winding drum.

Meanwhile, here are some of our members' comments on their favourite bits of the factory

John Mears: I can't get over the tiny hook that dips into the strands to pick up one single hair which is snatched in ultra quick time to create a weft in the cloth; those machinery movements are breathtaking.

Peter Mobbs: John has already backed the winner. I thought the hair picker was pure magic. Also, I was mesmerised by the huge drum that they wind the Egyptian cotton warp on to at the start of the process. John Boyd Textiles Factory is a truly fascinating facility!

Martin Gregory: It was a fascinating site. I remember horsehair cloth upholstery on chairs and trams as a little boy but seeing it woven still was remarkable.

Our grateful thanks are extended to the staff of the John Boyd Textiles Factory for allowing us to see the manufacture of, and learn about, their art.