

Tamworth Castle Mill- Community Archaeology in Action.



CENTRE OF
ARCHAEOLOGY



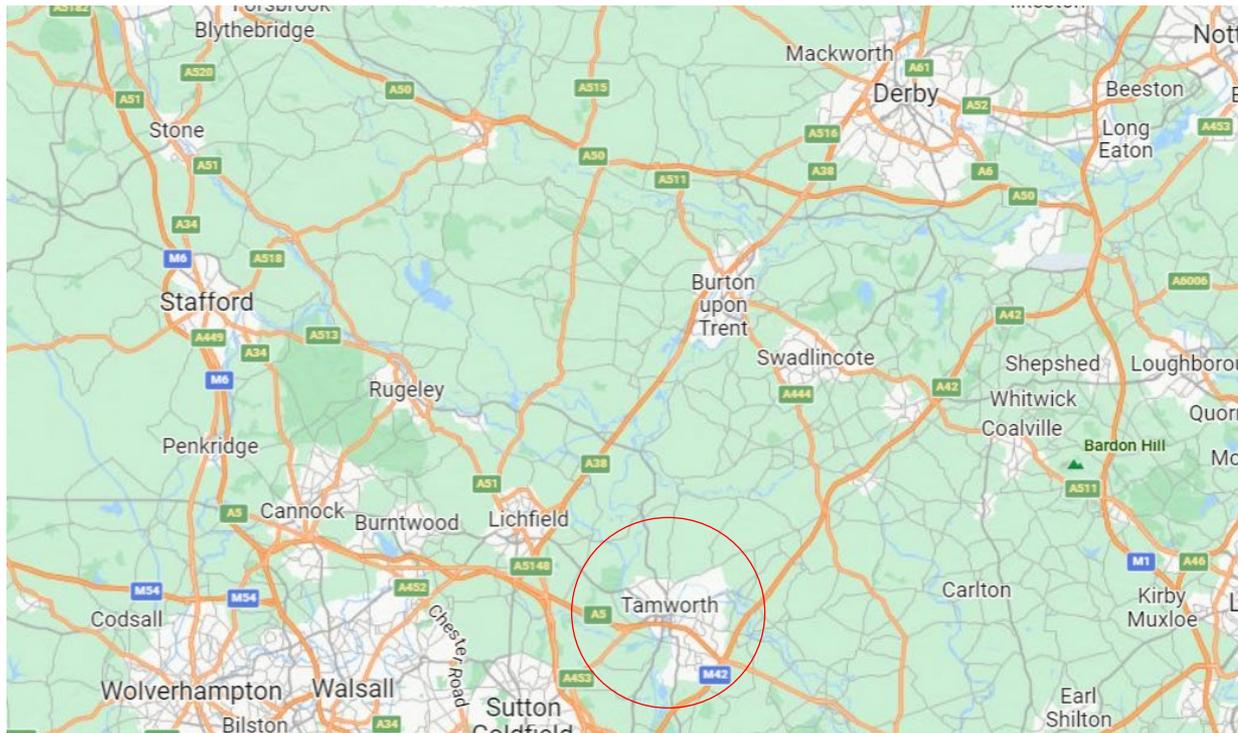
Tamworth
Borough Council

William Mitchell
Lecturer in Archaeology


STAFFORDSHIRE
UNIVERSITY

Tamworth

- Historically significant- Centre of Royal Power during the Anglo-Saxon period.
- 12th Century Motte and Bailey Castle (second largest Motte in the country)
- Formerly industrial and large post-war industrial presence (engineering, car manufacture etc- which has since reduced).



Development of the community project- Why?

- Project devised in **2022** through discussion with TBC, as a means of increasing community cohesion and volunteer engagement whilst supporting the levelling-up agenda of certain targeted groups.
- TBC corporate plan objectives:
 - *‘Embrace Tamworth’s history and culture so as to build a sense of local pride and support children’s education’*
 - *‘Develop its services in response to needs of the community and businesses recovering from the effects of the pandemic’*
 - *‘Engage local communities, schools, volunteers and under-served groups with their local heritage through hands-on activities and authentic archaeological investigation.’*
- Also- promotion of the role of the Castle and museum, and Staffordshire University within the region

Development of the community project- **Why?**

- October **2022** 4 day Community Excavation funded by Museum Development Art fund **Reset Grant**
- March **2023** 8 day Community Excavation funded by **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**
- *'It is about levelling up **opportunity and prosperity** and **overcoming** deep-seated geographical **inequalities** that have held us back for too long.*
- *It is also, fundamentally, about levelling up people's pride in the places they love and seeing that reflected back in empowered local leaders and communities, a stronger social fabric and better life chances'. (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities)*

Development of the community project- Why?

- Involvement in archaeology/ archaeological research projects has been shown to be successful as an intervention for promoting mental wellbeing, improvements in health and community cohesion.
- Previous studies (although limited) have also highlighted that involvement in heritage projects have *'the potential to positively influence well-being and personal happiness'* (Sayer 2015).
- Our 'common' heritage and the shared experience of investigation can improve communities and life expectancy (Jolly E, Tamir D.I, Burum B, Mitchell J.P, 2019).

Development of the community project- **Why?**

- The project aims were to:
 - **Engage** local communities, schools, volunteers and under-served groups with their local heritage through hands-on activities and authentic archaeological investigation.
 - To **inspire curiosity** into the development of the town centre and local historic environment, particularly its less well-known industrial heritage.
 - To **raise the profile** of Tamworth Castle and other heritage assets to attract more visitors to the town.
 - To **reduce physical and economic barriers** to accessing heritage activities by delivering free events outside the castle walls.
 - To **develop new partnerships and collaborations** which will form the basis of ongoing research and events to strengthen local history education and the tourism offer.
 - To **enhance community cohesion**, increase social action and develop physical and mental wellbeing as a result of participation in archaeological and heritage activities.
 - To **provide training and skills development opportunities** to volunteers and local students.

Why Staffordshire University? Prior collaboration with Tamworth Borough Council From 2021 – Commercial Archaeological Projects



Archaeological Building Recording



3D Modelling Projects

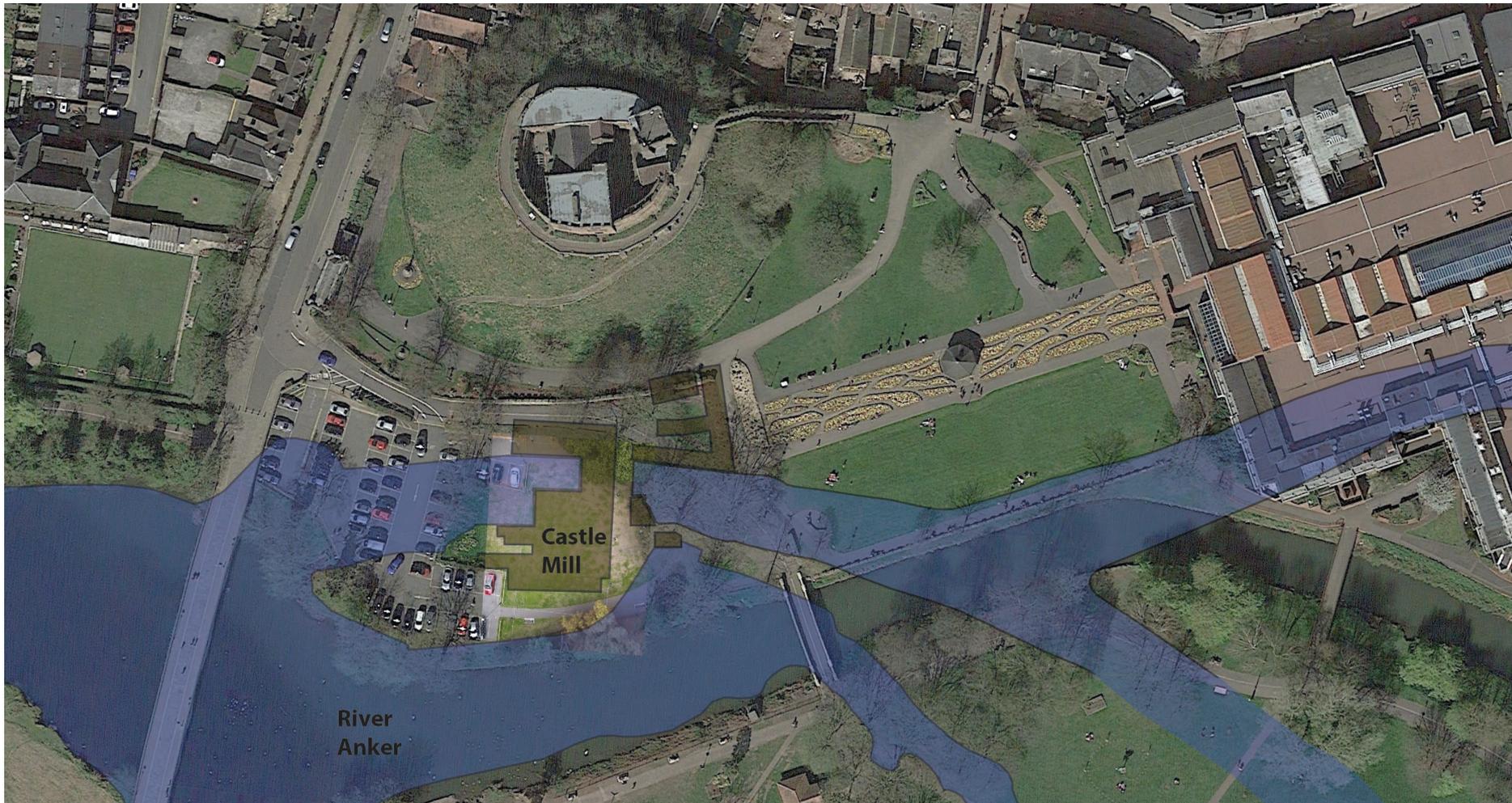


Archaeological Watching Briefs



Desk-Based Research

Site Location- Tamworth Castle Mill





Historical Background

Tamworth Castle Mill- The Early period

- **1162/3?** Medieval Corn Mill (water powered mill)
- **1485**- surviving indenture which refers to Castle Mills
- **16th century** document. Bill of complaint by Humfrey Ferrers – relating to the Castle Mill.
- **1653**- Three corn mills and one fulling mill (cleansing of woven cloth).



Historical Background

Tamworth Castle Mill- The 18th Century

- **1742.** Water powered Corn mill(s) (by the 18th Century this probably meant a significant redevelopment of the earlier medieval mill buildings- some of these 18th Century buildings may have originated in the preceding centuries)



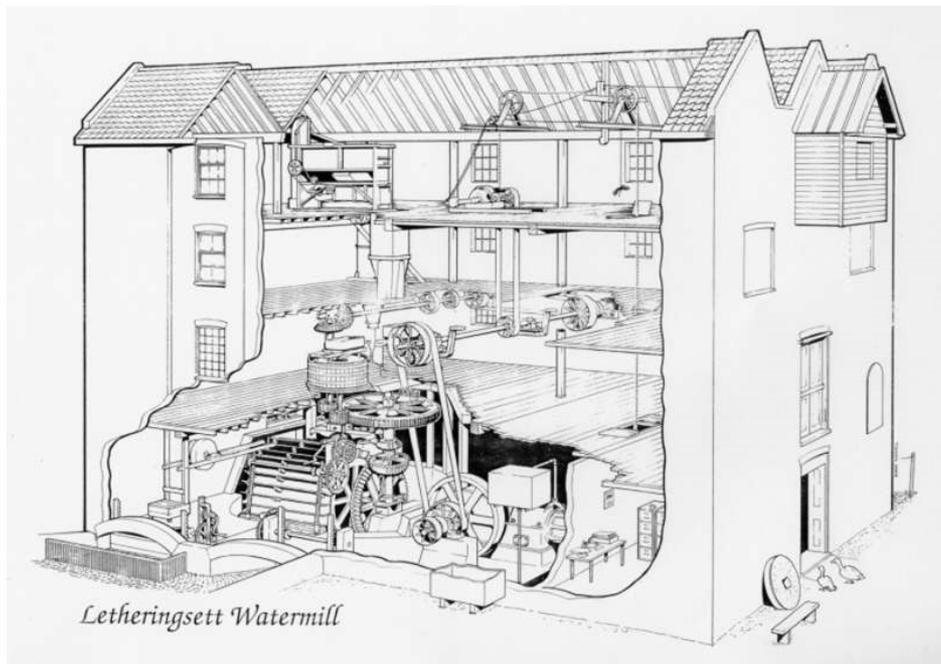
Stebbing Shaw 1780



William Wyatt 1741



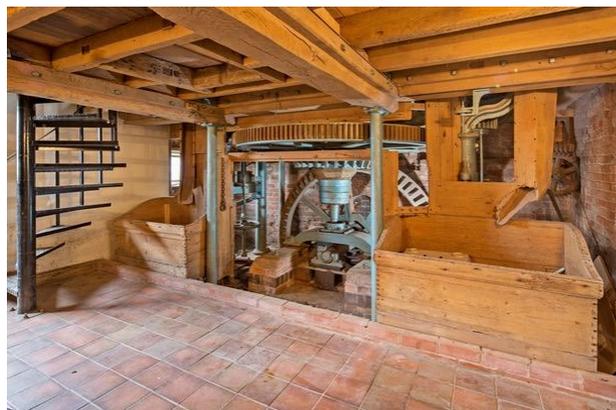
Corn Mill



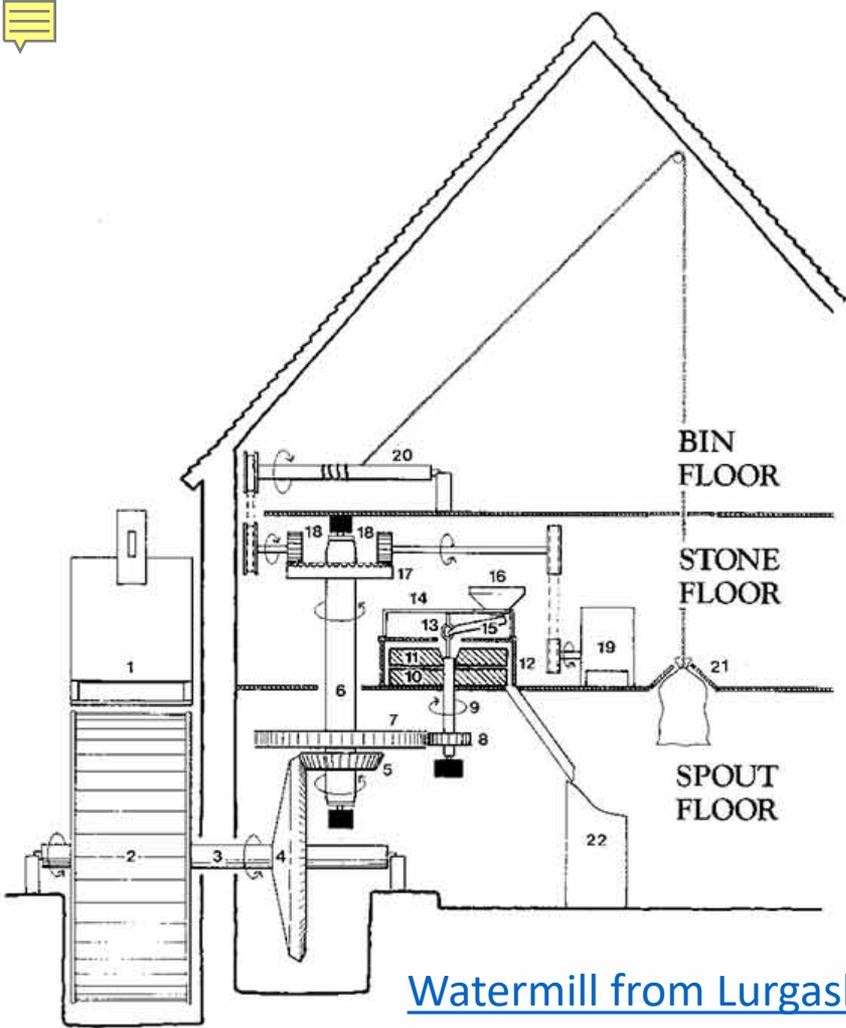
Letherinsett Corn Mill, Norfolk



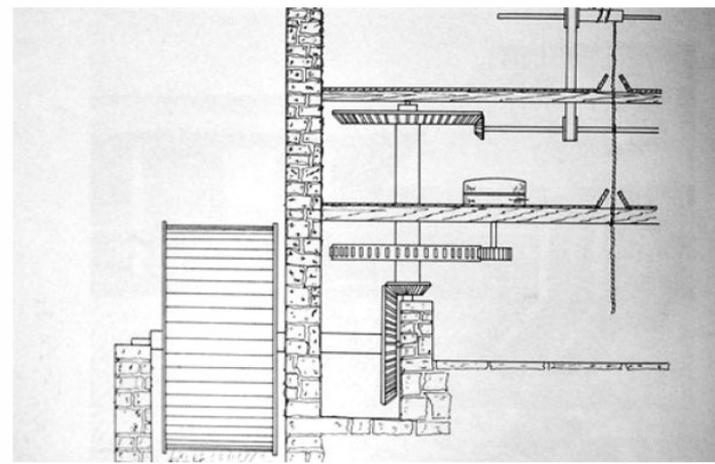
Henwood Mill, Solihull



Castle Mill 1780

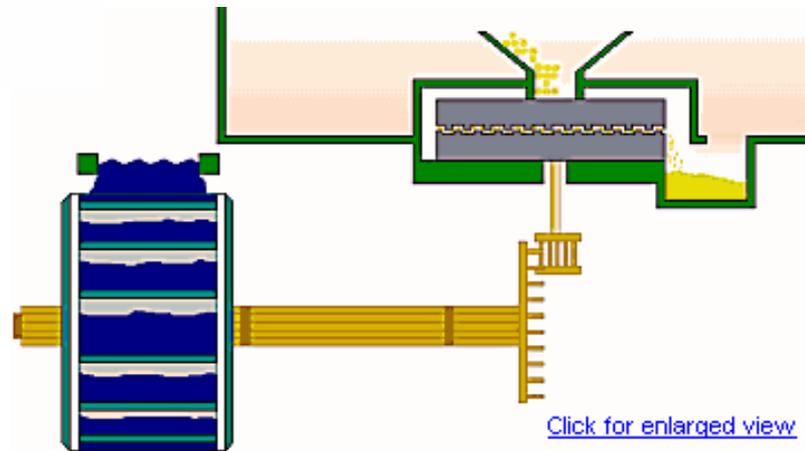


- 1 Penstock
- 2 Waterwheel
- 3 Watershaft
- 4 Pit wheel
- 5 Wallower
- 6 Mainshaft
- 7 Great spur wheel
- 8 Stone nut
- 9 Spindle
- 10 Bedstone
- 11 Runner stone
- 12 Tun
- 13 Damsel
- 14 Horse
- 15 Shoe
- 16 Grain hopper
- 17 Crown wheel
- 18 Ancillary drives
- 19 Grain scourer and aspirator
- 20 Hoist
- 21 Sack flaps
- 22 Meal bin



[Watermill from Lurgashall - Weald & Downland Living Museum \(wealddown.co.uk\)](http://wealddown.co.uk)

The corn mill



[Click for enlarged view](#)

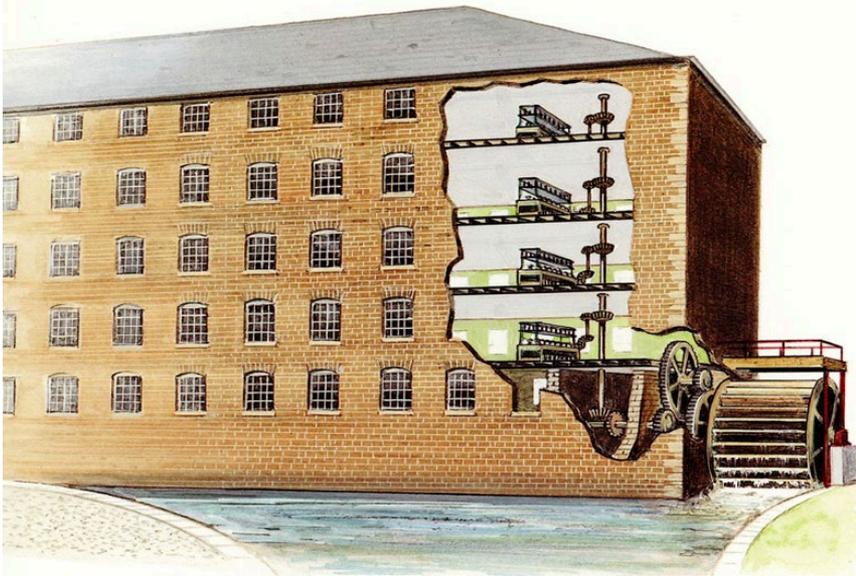
Historical Background

- **1788?** (Certainly by 1798). Ownership of Sir Robert Peel and conversion to cotton spinning within the main mill. Construction of a large water powered cotton spinning mill (Arkwright design) in the location of the earlier 18th Century mill buildings- some of which were redeveloped.



G. Samuel 1798

Cotton Spinning Mill



Arkwright's Mill, Derbyshire

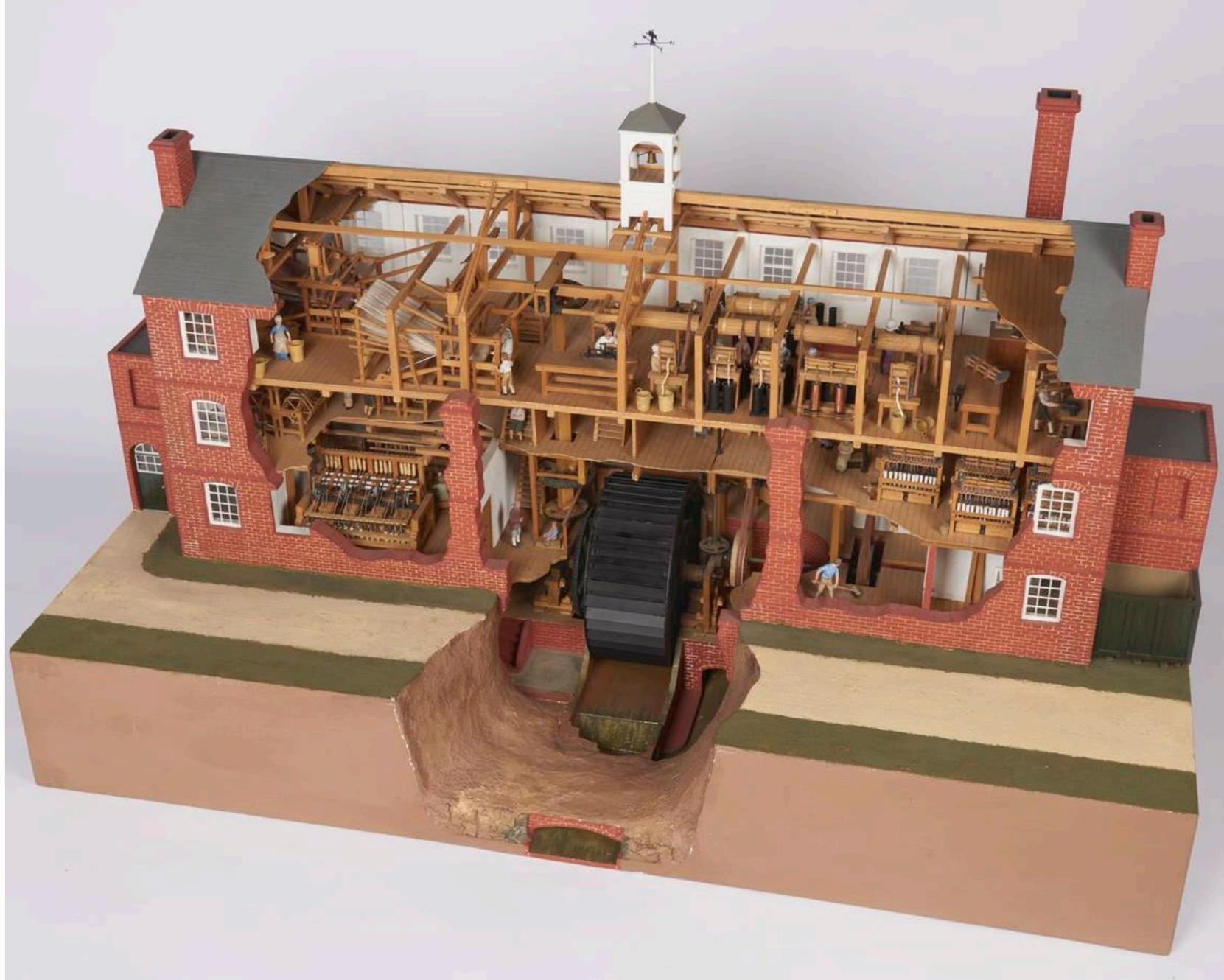


Quarry Bank Mill, Cheshire



Tamworth has... *'numerous corn and cotton mills, including that of the Peel family on the River Tame'* (Pigot's Commercial Directory. 1828-9).

Castle Mill 1798



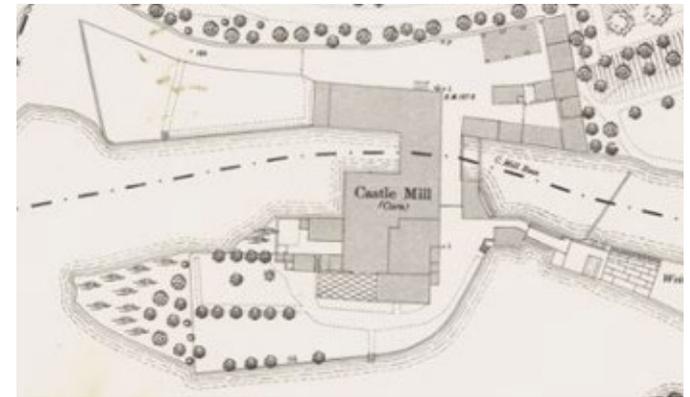
The **Textile Mill**- Colcroft worsted mill, Bedworth 1790

Historical Background

- **Between 1830's – 1875.** Land reclamation around the mill. Introduction of additional buildings including a large extension to the main spinning mill to the west. A tall chimney present on the archive images suggests the introduction of a steam engine. Steam power was likely to be used in addition to water- power (possible dual use during this period - corn/ cotton).

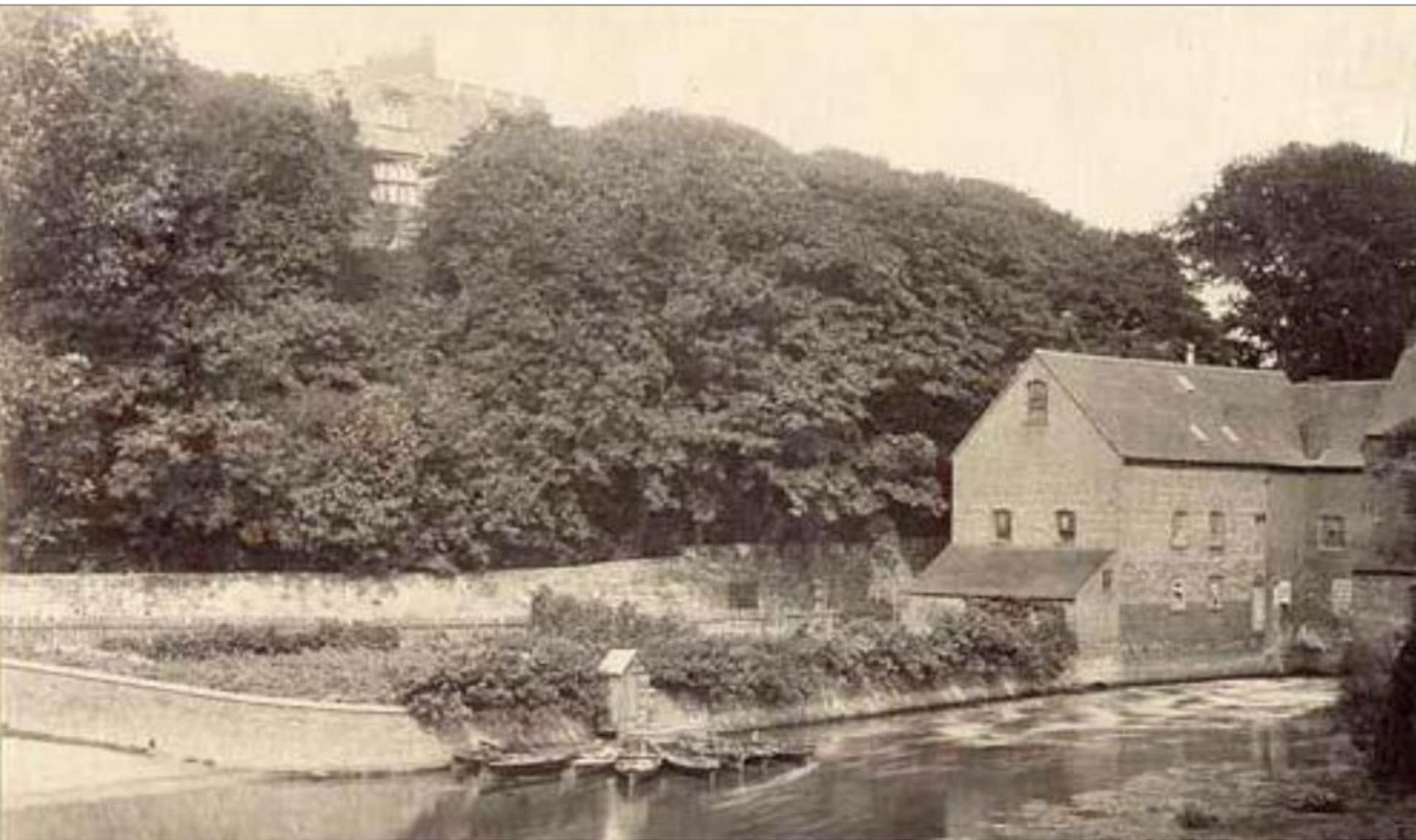


Late 19th century



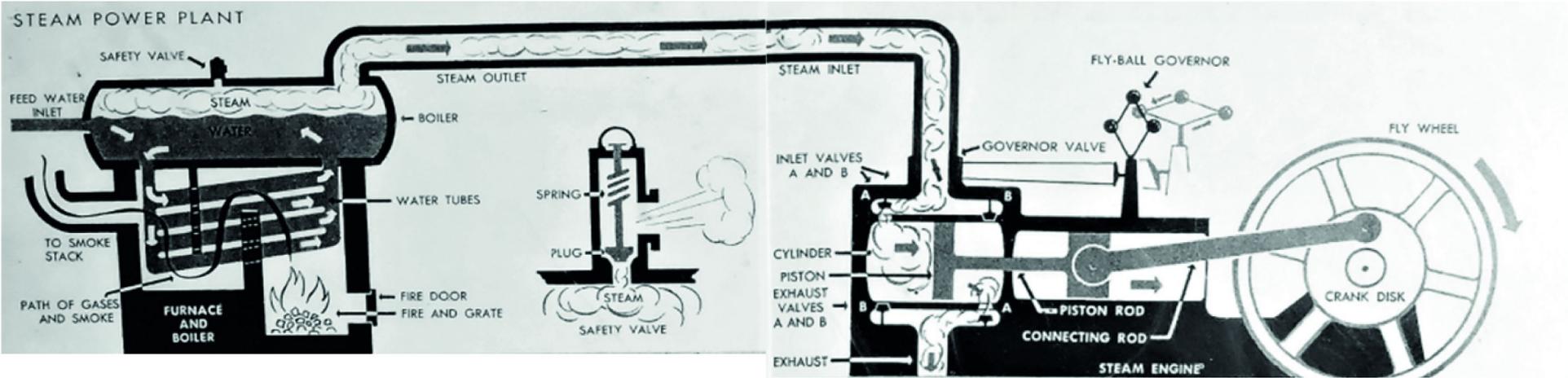
1884





Tamworth Mill C.1870s-

Corn / Cotton Mill



Introduction of steam engine.



Castle Mill 1875

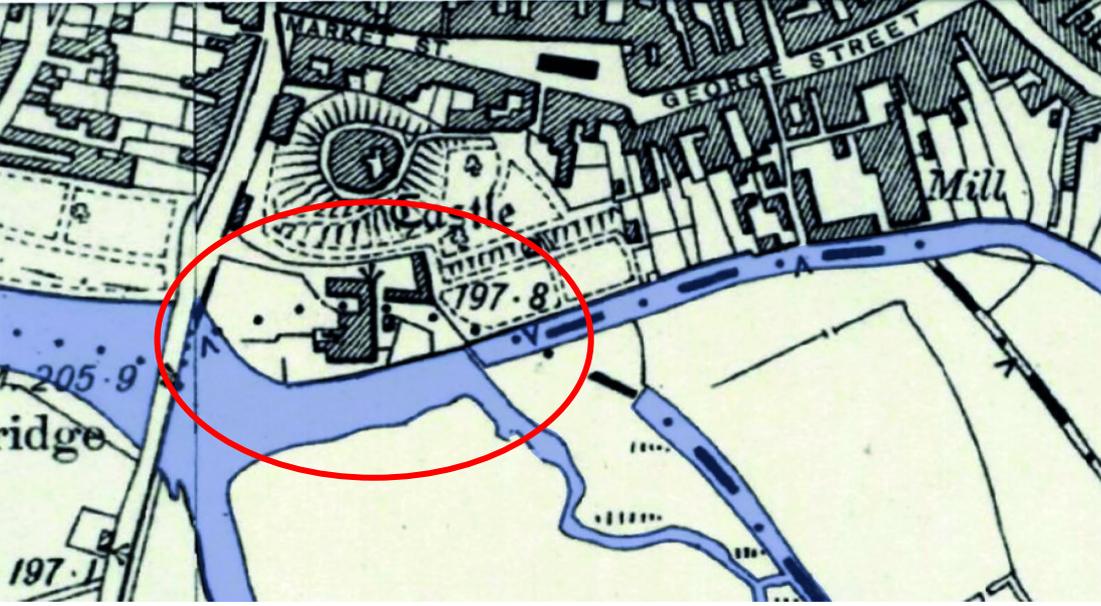
Historical Background

1902-3. Infilling of the northernmost watercourse- full conversion to steam or introduction of electric power.

1920. Demolition of Tamworth Castle Mill.



1884

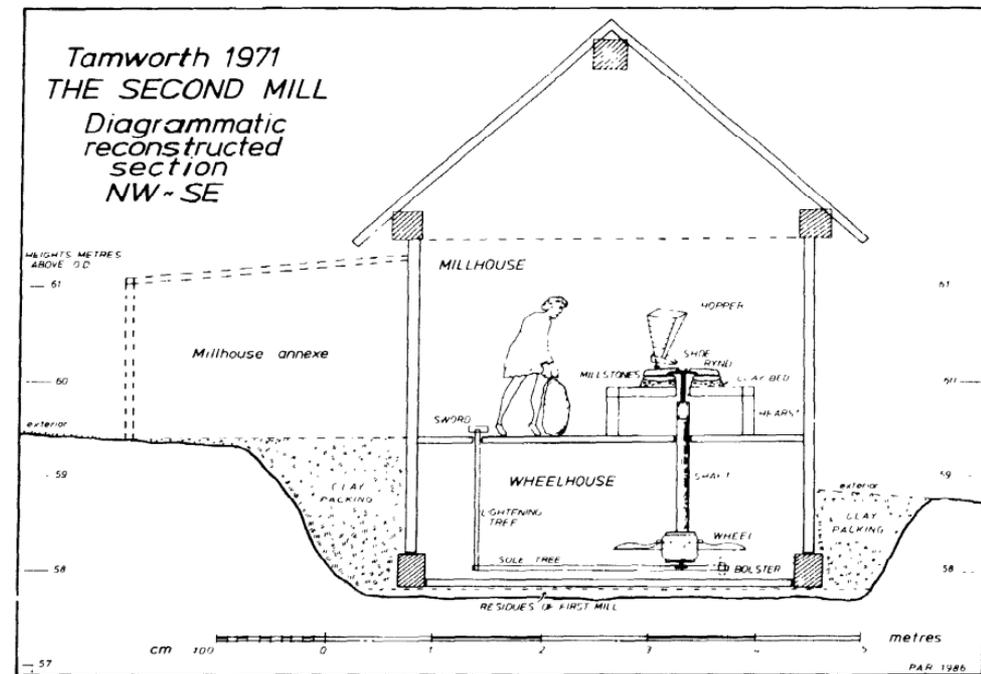


1903

Tamworth Mills



Tamworth Mills



Saxon Mill (8th century). Tamworth is known to have been important within Mercia, because it had a water mill which ground grain for food for the settlement and its livestock. The mill is believed to be the earliest (post-Roman) watermill found in Britain.

It was powered by the River Anker and used mill stones traded to King Offa from the French King Charlemagne, in exchange for English woollen cloaks.

Tamworth Mills



c.1968-70

Bolehall Mill (c.1820 – 1972) (nr Bolebridge Street) produced tapes and webbing. The building was established as a shoe factory in the 1850s, but was subsequently taken over by the Bole Hall Mill Co Ltd. known to have been in existence by 1820, if not before.

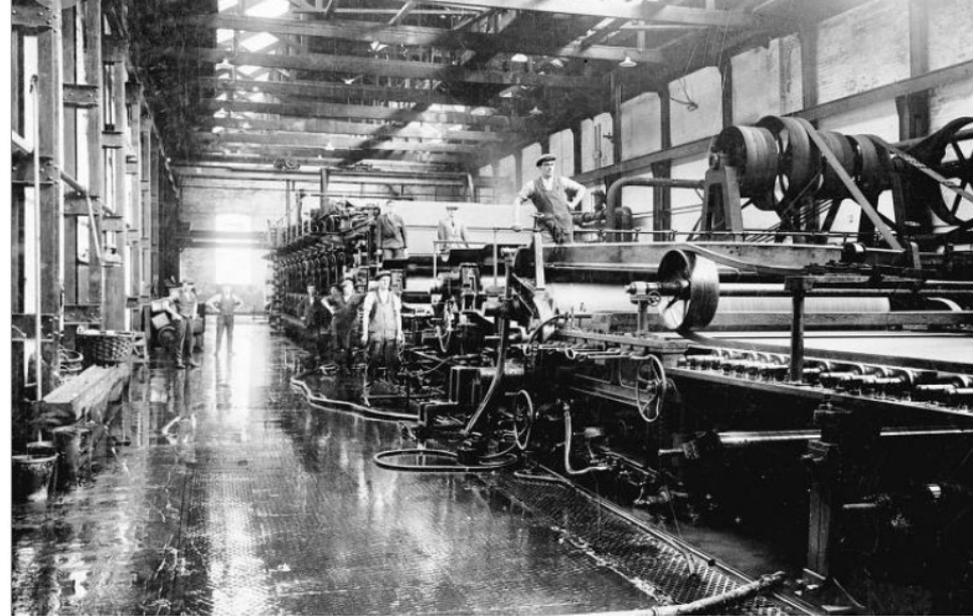
Bolehall Mill produced tapes and webbing, mainly in cotton, linen and man-made fibres. They also produced Egyptian tapes, cotton webs, and spindle tapes for mainly industrial uses. These tapes and webs would have supplied many trades including the car, railway, and clothing industries, and general engineering.

Tamworth Mills

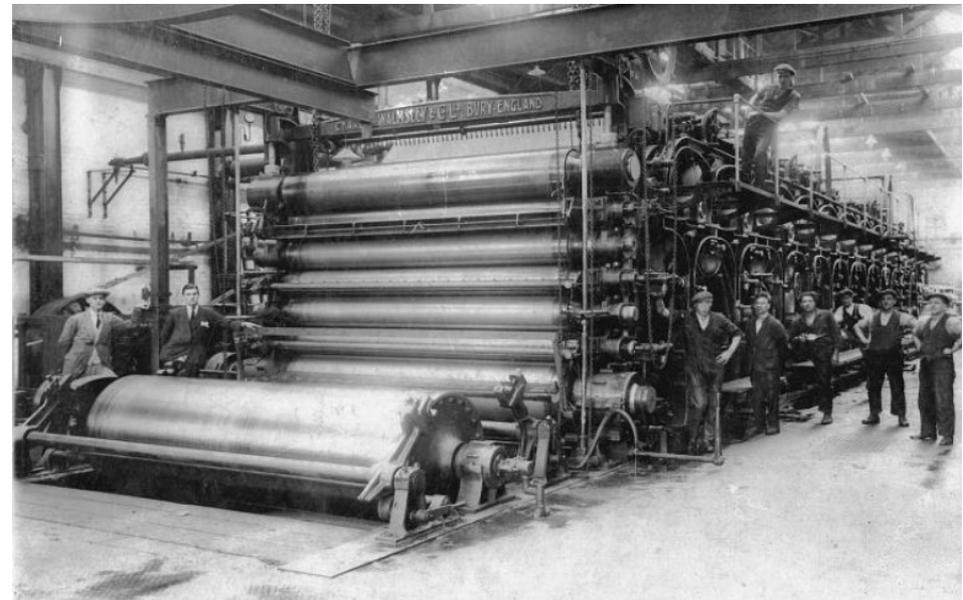


c.1971

Alders Paper Mill (c.1820) Lichfield Road. Was founded by Quakers and was in production for about 200 years under various names It was demolished in 2000.



c.1920-30 Fordrinier Machine- enabled continuous paper making of any size, rather than producing sheets



c.1920-30 Paper Making Machine- Number 2 paper making machine showing the calendering rollers and drying section

Tamworth Mills



Shannons Mill (1826)- Lichfield Street. Clothing mill. The mill was originally built by Thomas Cooke senior.

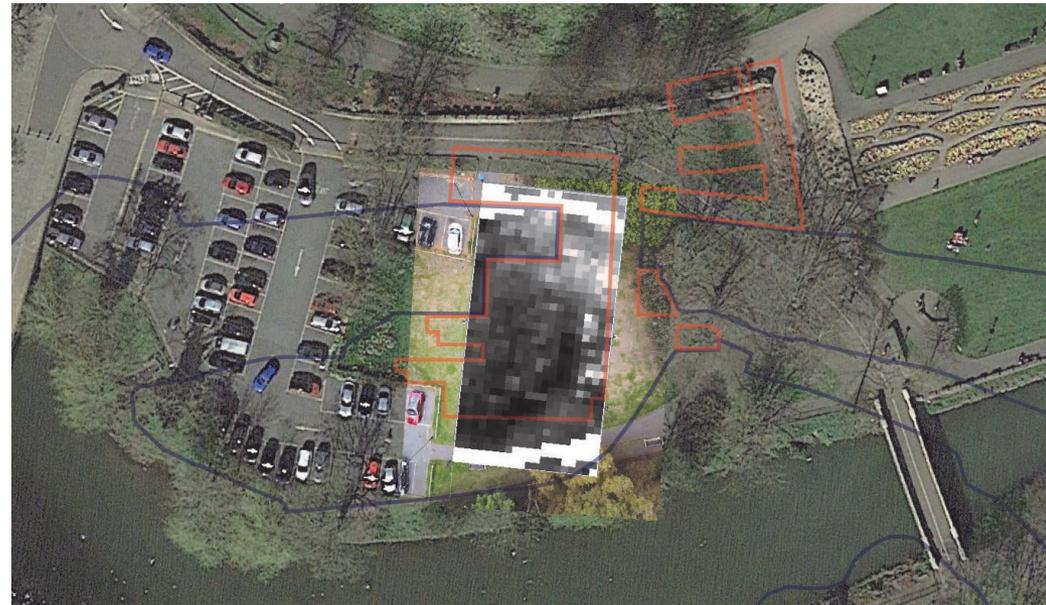


c.1940s- Uniform Making

Pre-Project Resistivity Survey

- In September 2022 a resistivity survey was undertaken over the site of Tamworth Castle Mill (Repton Local History Group)

- An area of high resistance was located along the eastern part of the grid corresponding with the mill's eastern wall.



Methodology



Phase 1- October 2022- 4 day pilot excavation.

Open to the public- free involvement

Volunteers supported visitors.

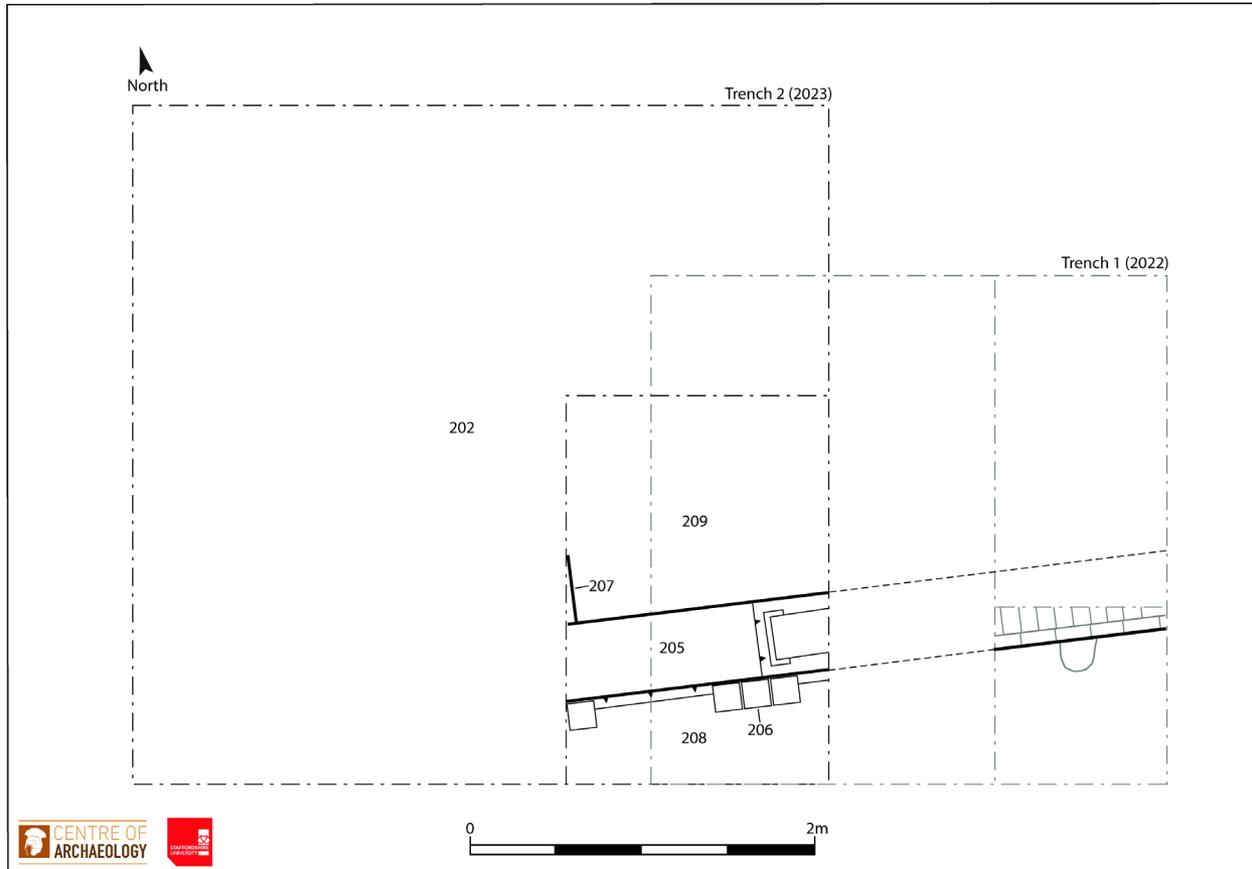
Excavation, soil sieving and finds processing



Phase 2- March 2023

- Open to the public- involvement needed to be booked ½ hour sessions available 10.00-16.00
- School groups (classes of up to 30) booked a 1 hour time slot-
- Volunteer support.
- Excavation, soil sieving and finds processing and supporting activities

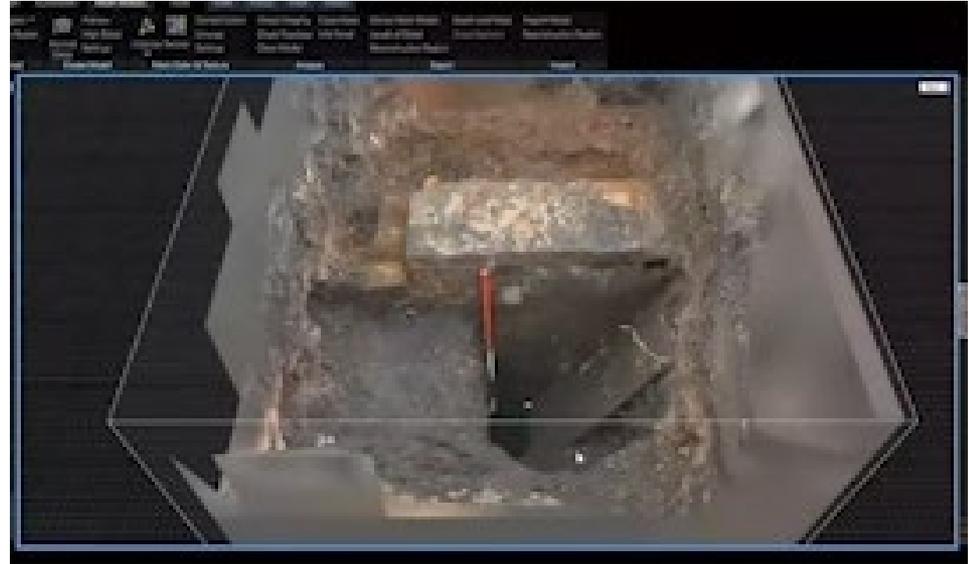
Results

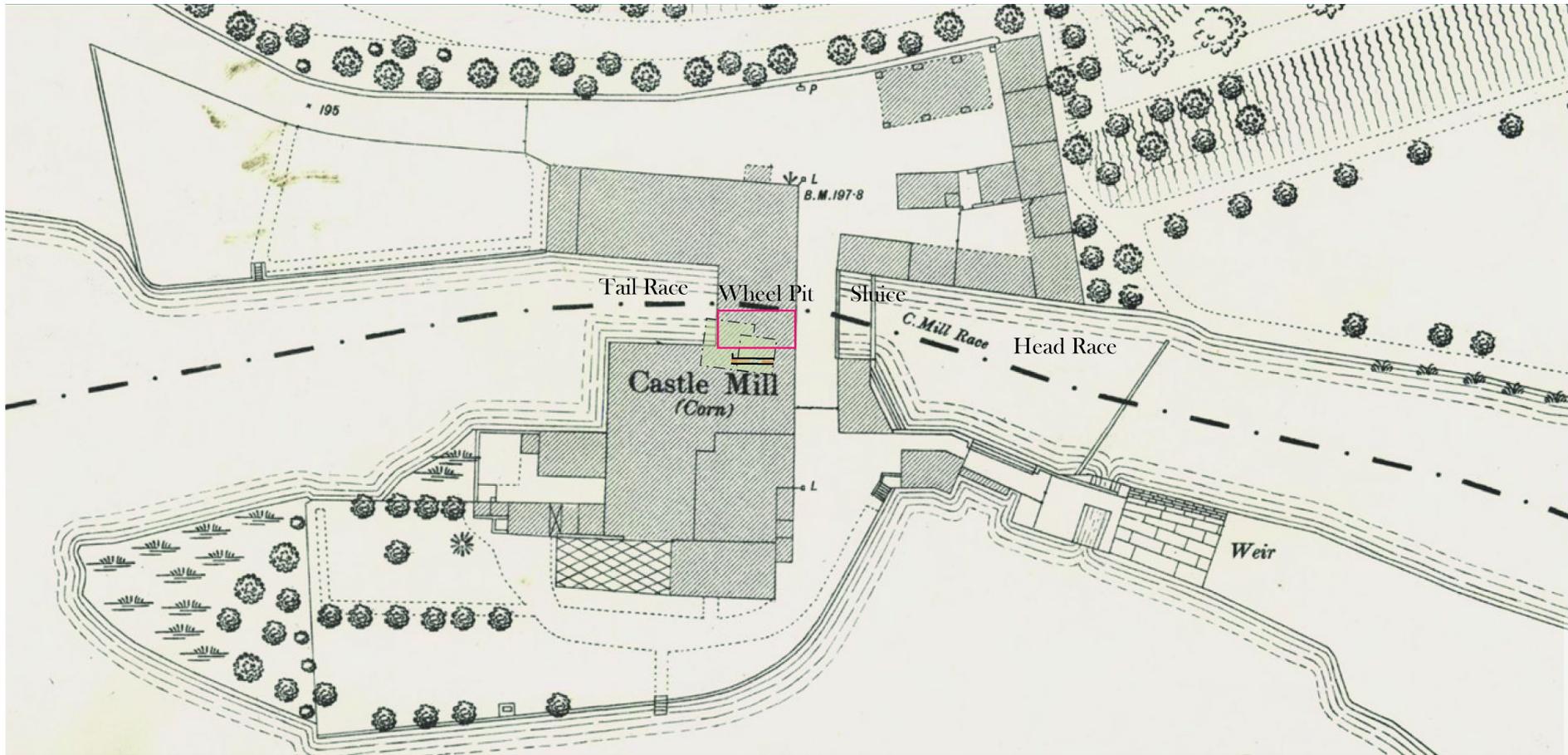


Trench 1 2022

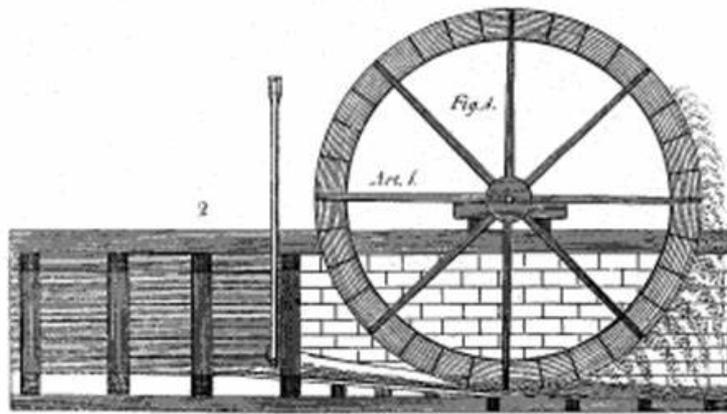


Trench 2 2023

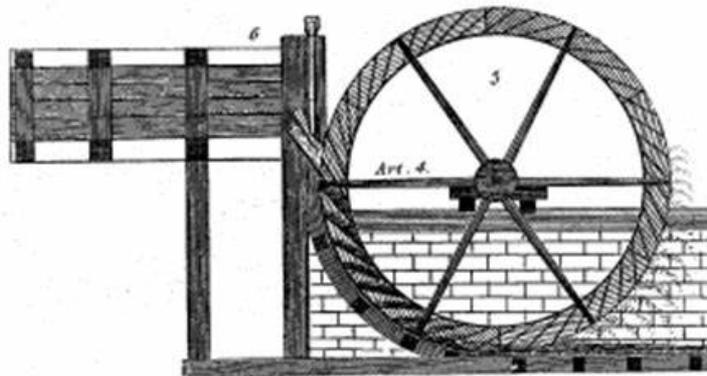




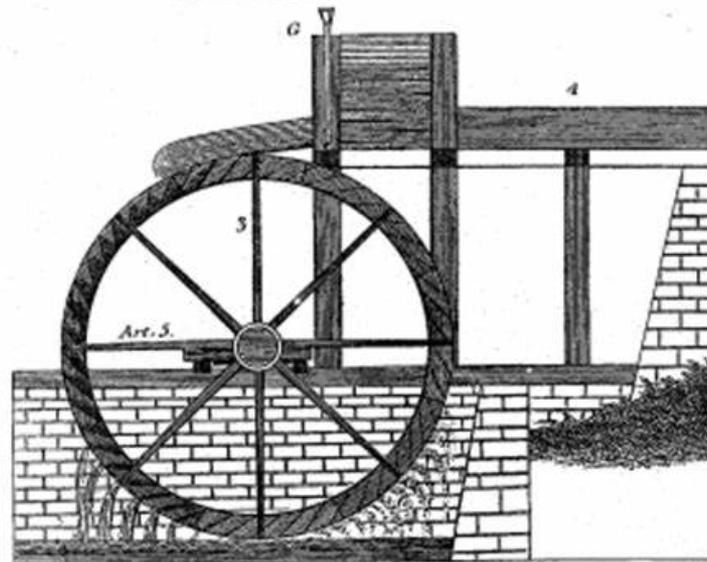
Tamworth Castle Mill in 1884



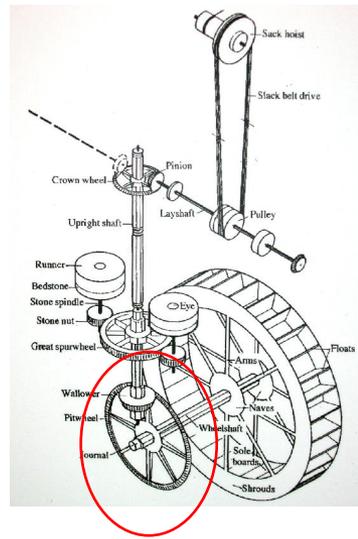
Undershot water-wheel



Breastshot water-wheel

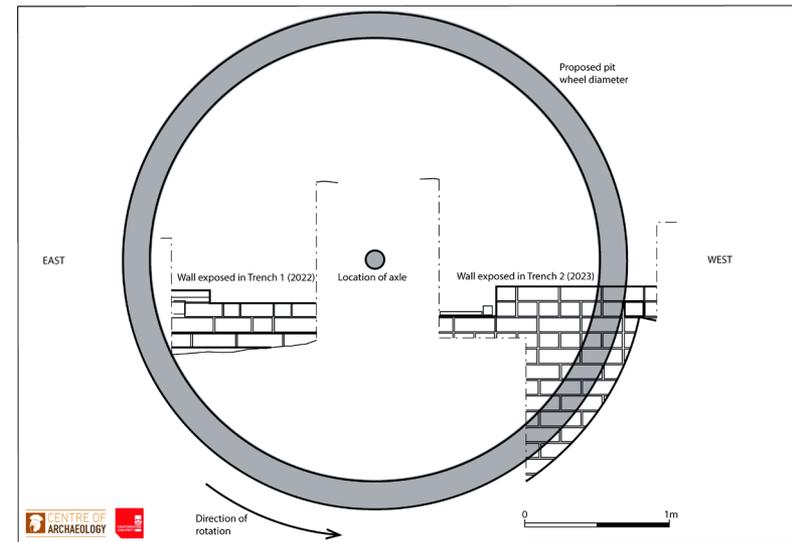
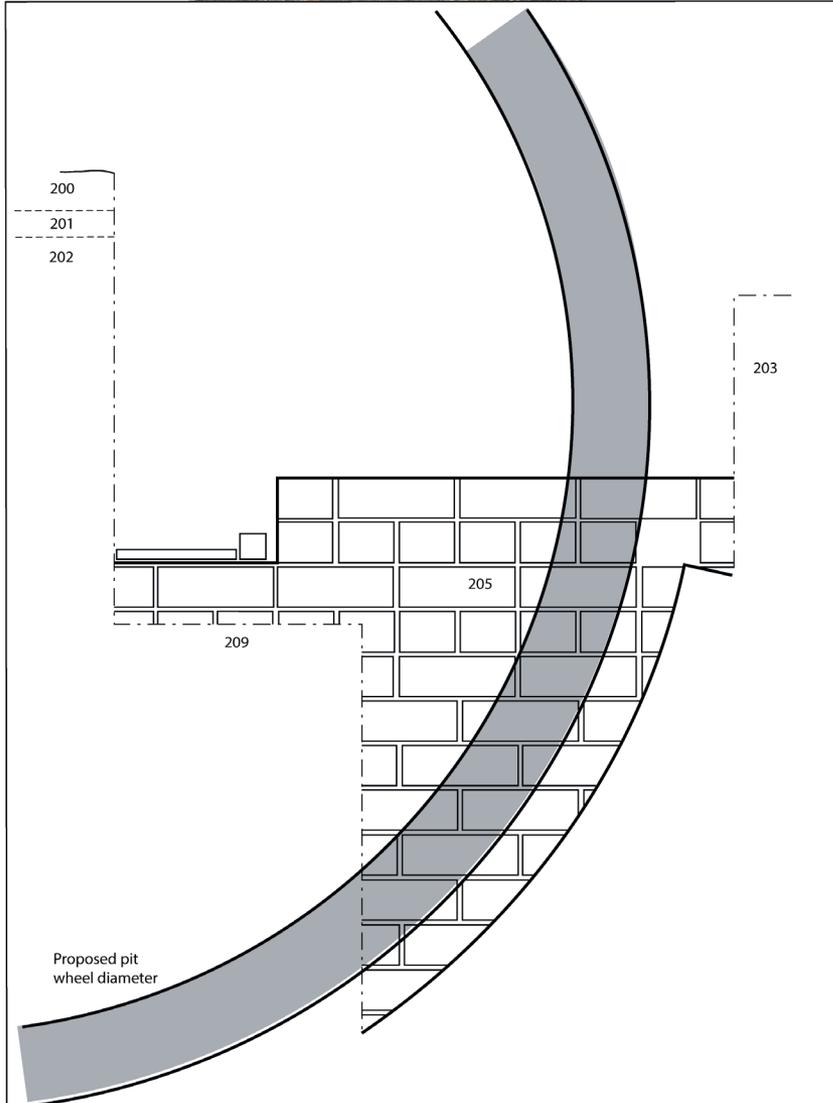


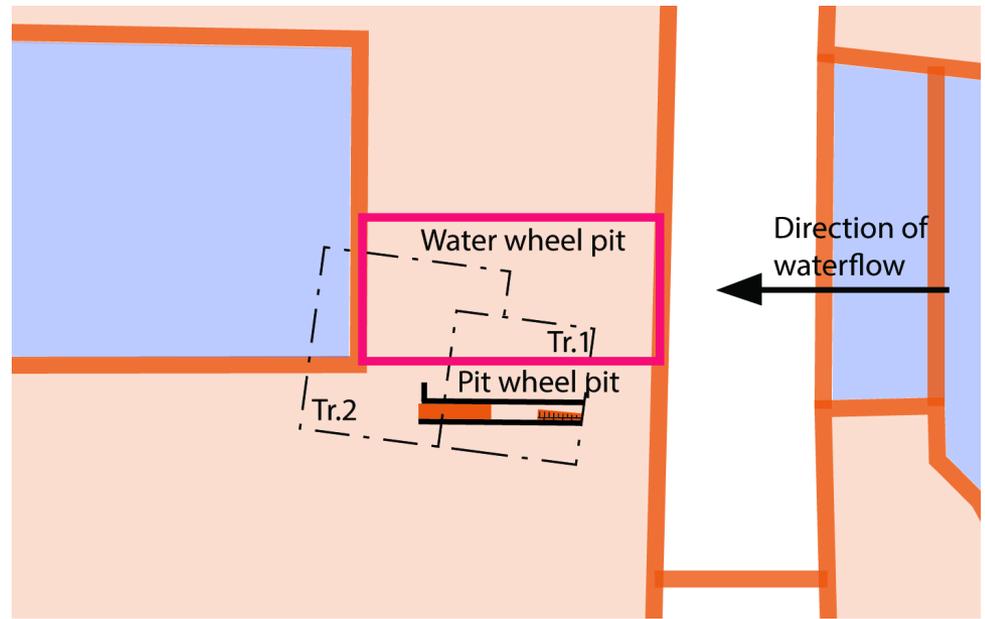
Overshot water-wheel



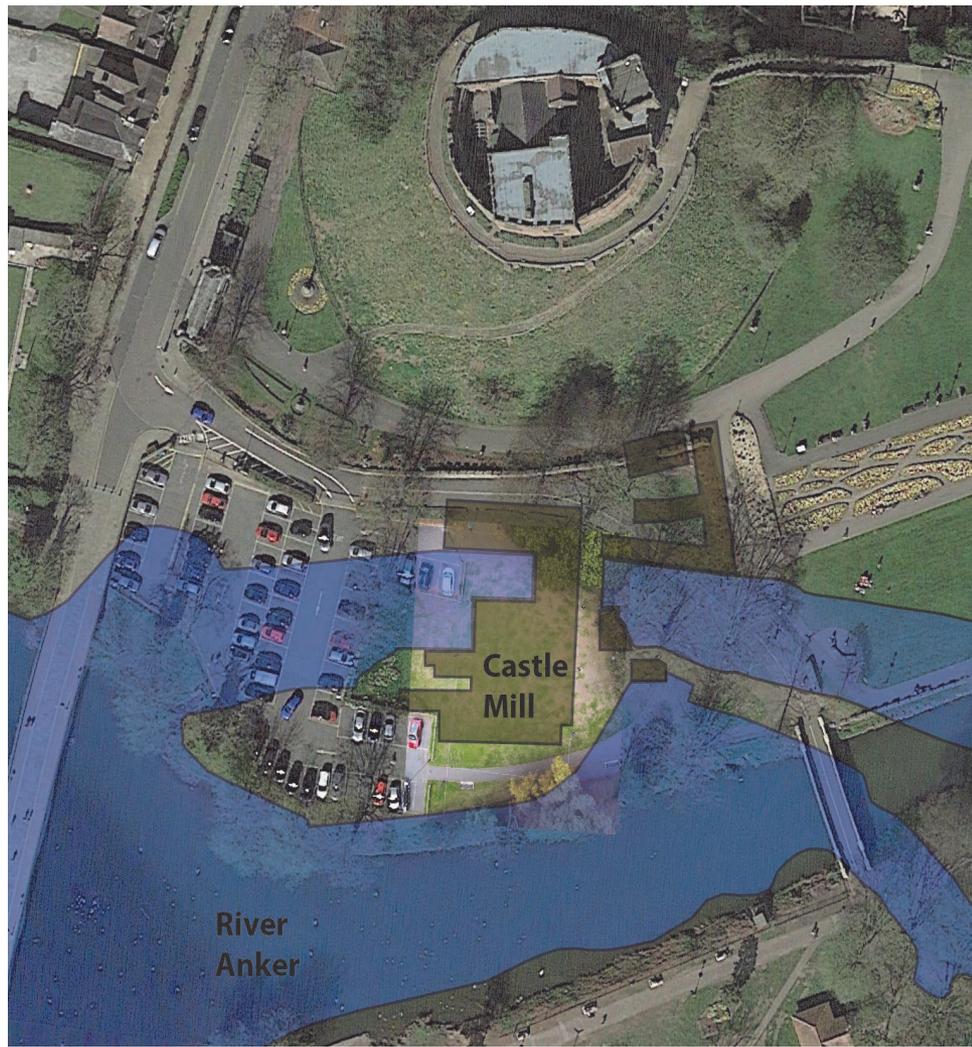
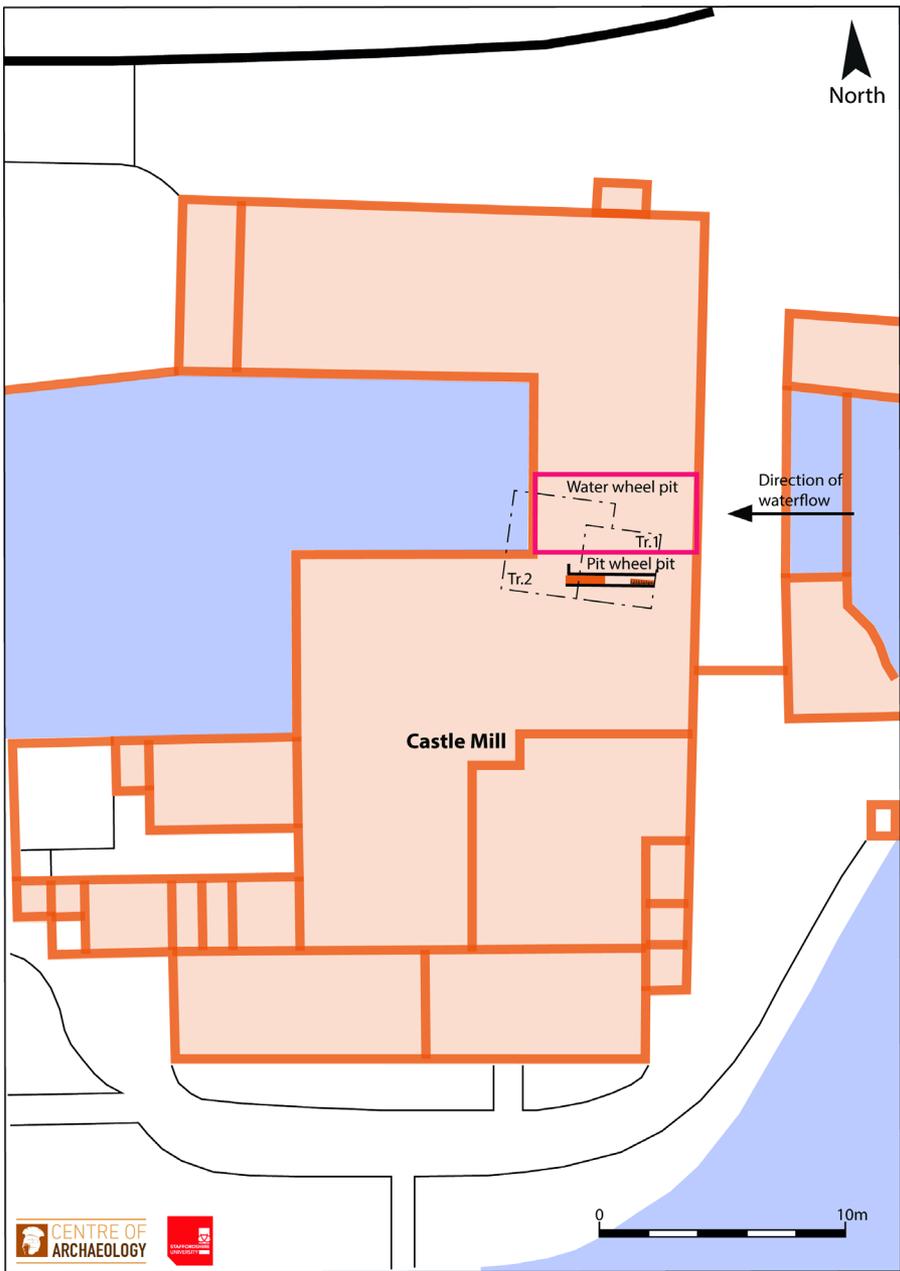
The pit-wheel pit

Pit wheel- c.3.5m in diameter





The Mill in 1885



Based on Ordnance Survey plan of 1884



Early 20th century artefacts (Edwardian)

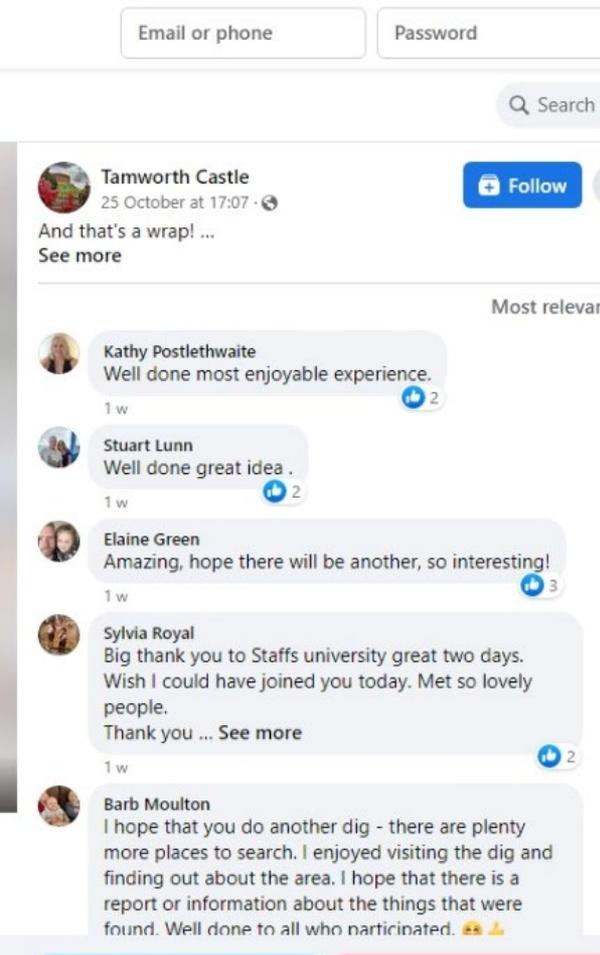






Successes- Interactions and Engagement

- During Phase 1 an estimated 250 people visited each day. 135 survey forms were completed.
- On the last two days so many people wanted to join we were obliged to ration the length of time volunteers could spend in the test pit.



Typical comments included:

- *It shows Tamworth's making the most of its heritage;*
- *Brilliant to see local heritage discovered in real time;*
- *Makes you feel better about Tamworth;*
- *Nice to get the kids working with their hands, not on tablets;*
- *It's great the way it combines social, historical and outdoors activity;*
- *More of a buzz in Tamworth;*
- *It makes it more real to see how much hard work goes into it;*
- *I feel more connected to local history;*
- *We didn't appreciate how much would be found.*

Successes- Interactions and Engagement

- During Phase 2 (2023) Over 480 people (aged between 2 and 70) including six school classes assisted in the excavation. Each day, there were numerous other visitors to the site.

Claire Louise Crompton
It was a fab day 😊 lots of pottery and glass. We found a lovely little button. Really looking forward to seeing the finds as it gets deeper.
Love Reply Hide Send message 3 d

**Nicola Tame
Dee Reid**
Like Reply Hide Send message 1 d

Melanie Nash
If there are any cancellation spots can you please 🙏 let me know. What a fantastic opportunity for our community.
Like Reply Hide Send message 2 d

**Georgina Gwynn
Matthew Gwynn**
Like Reply Hide Send message 3 d

Sally Palmer Pugh
The complete, light beige pot in the top left tray, almost end of video, is there a name for this style pot please as I have similar? Thank you!
Like Reply Hide Send message 2 d

Billy Cotton
I popped in for a look. Seeing the young kids enthusiastically digging and looking for stuff I liked. Well done.
Love Reply Hide Send message 3 d

Sue Rudge ...
Wow well done all x
Like Reply Hide Send message 3 d

Wayne Dolman
Awesome day, Rio loved it, he would still be there now with a headlight torch on digging away if they'd have let him 🤪
Love Reply Hide Send message 3 d

**Bradders Bradley
Darren Lynx Sedgwick**

Fascinating finds revealed in the latest community dig

By DAN NEWBOULD
News Reporter

MANY more fascinating finds were discovered as people braved the weather for the second community archaeological dig in Tamworth this week.

Back in October last year the first event took place by Holloway Lodge in the Castle Grounds. A small area believed to be the site of a castle mill was explored. The test pit was successful, with many interesting items revealed, but more importantly the wall of the mill was uncovered.

This second dig, taking place from Saturday, March 18 to yesterday, Wednesday, March 22, has expanded on this in a bid to hopefully uncover more of the mill.

The public could pop down at any time on any day for free to observe progress, although participation was limited to the first two days and late afternoon Monday to Wednesday.

One of those to attend was Chris Mills who went with daughter Ash, aged 14, and son Jack, age 9, the latter of whom found a tiny button.

Chris said: "Jack is proud of the little button. He was hoping for treasure, but this is still treasure to us. He really enjoyed it and asked if we can go again or find other digs we can help with. We found lots of bits of pottery, animal bone and glass shards.

"We decided to go as me, my daughter and son all enjoy metal detecting and history so when we had the opportunity to get stuck in and

maybe find a little piece of history, especially that of our home town, we jumped at the chance.

"It was very well organised and the team onsite were professional, friendly and talked to us about the finds. The rain didn't stop play either. It was a brilliant idea putting the marquee over the trench. We felt like we were in an episode of Time Team; a bucket list item for me!"

The dig was again led by archaeologist William Mitchell, lecturer at Staffordshire University. Students also joined, conducting academic research in the area known to have housed historical mills potentially dating back to the Medieval period.

Providing an update to the Herald while the dig was still going on on Tuesday, Anna Miller, Assistant Director for Growth and Regeneration at Tamworth Borough Council, said: "It is going fantastically well with so much positive public engagement. The public dig time slots have been fully booked daily, with people also dropping in to observe the findings and chat with the volunteers.

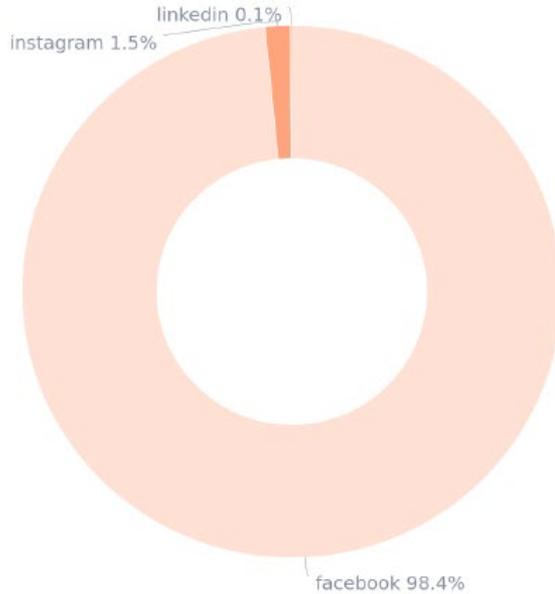
"Earlier this week we had school visits with more than 90 children on site from a local school on Monday. It was great to see how local history can engage young visitors. We are very excited to share our finds publicly once they have been cleaned and identified. So far we have retrieved items of pottery, glass (including complete bottles and stained glass), animal bones, buttons and objects such as clay pipes and a knife."



Successes- Profile Raising and Reach

Impressions

Number of times a content of your social profiles has been viewed during the selected period.



Facebook	187K
Instagram	2.9K
LinkedIn	153
Total impressions	190K



The total impressions are

190,395

representing a variation of **0 %**
compared to **3 Feb. 2023 - 28 Feb. 2023**

Successes: Educational training- positive school feedback- at both Primary and Secondary level

TAMWORTH COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

School Outreach Session

Teacher survey

Mrs Mounard Florevalve Primary School

Has your pupils' interest in local history changed as a result of this session?

Increased Decreased No change

Has their understanding of how we find out about local history changed?

Improved Worsened No change

Were your pupils engaged with the subject and presenters?

A lot Quite Not at all

Has this session helped your teaching of local history?

Yes No

What would improve this session?

Just longer! Will was excellent. The children thoroughly enjoyed it.



TAMWORTH COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

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Has this session helped your teaching of local history?

Yes No

What would improve this session?

- More activities/ projects like this. The students loved it! They were so interested and thoroughly enjoyed the visit.



Successes- Reducing barriers, mixed demographics

'We attended with my husband, 7 year old daughter, 18 month old daughter and myself. My 18 month old Margot enjoyed emptying soil. However my 7 year old Elsie found the experience exciting and fascinating .'

'We took 6 grandchildren with us and they thoroughly enjoyed it. They wished the time was longer than the 20 minutes'

'The main highlights for me were:-

- Coming back each day and seeing that they had dug deeper in the corner*
- Finding the curved wall where the water wheel was*
- Chatting with the people who were doing the digging was great too'*

Positive community representation and feedback



Immediate Impact- Projects inspired by the Community Excavations and led by Tamworth Castle staff and volunteers.

‘Inter-Woven’

- Woven cloth installed around the castle to form a large community exhibition
- Community project connecting a strong heritage with today's innovative developments in the Textile Industry, creating an expression of Tamworth's rich and diverse communities.
- Huge response with contributions arriving from as far afield as Scotland
- Digital reach was around 50k





• School Outreach sessions

A KS2 history session was trialled in January 2023 at several schools local to Tamworth, based around the community archaeological excavation. 127 children were surveyed over five sessions.

- 98% said they enjoyed the session.
- 84% said it had made them feel more positive about living in the Tamworth area
- 91% said they would like to find out more about history

• Family activities

- Make your own treasure chest – family craft activity They were all interested in the archaeological excavation and some said they had signed up already for the next.

“We really enjoyed working on this project and the project at the castle.....Should you need us in the future, we would be glad to help.” (Participant on the project)

- Shop window exhibition.

Exhibition in the window of an empty shop unit on the high street to display finds from the dig and provide information about the site. It had the added benefit of improving the appearance of an unused unit.



Next Steps.....

- Continuation of the project- **Phase 3**- October 2023?
- Archaeological projects on additional sites- led by community groups and volunteers
- Closer partnership to support both TBC Corporate Priorities and the Community Archaeology module of the new Staffordshire University Humanitarian Archaeology undergraduate course (2024)
- Our ambition – *‘to establish funding for 2 to 5 years to sustain the activity beyond the annual cycle and to showcase Tamworth as a centre of research which in turn reinforces its historic significance.’*
(Tamworth BC)

Thank you.

William.Mitchell@Staffs.ac.uk

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