

Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings reopens after eight-year renovation

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The historic Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings - the 'grandparent of skyscrapers' - has opened its doors again following 35 years of closure thanks to £20.7million National Lottery funding.

Four listed buildings on site are now fully restored: the Smithy, Stables, Main Mill and Kiln. Their redevelopment has been led by Historic England and The Friends of Shrewsbury Flaxmill.

The Main Mill and Kiln have now opened for the first time as a visitor attraction, café and workspace.



Turning flax into linen thread

The new attraction, 'The Mill', will tell the story of a pioneering flax mill, purpose-built in an area of England with a long history of textile production.

Its crucial role in the industrial revolution will be shared in an interactive experience spread across three spaces on the ground floor.



The new exhibition 'The Mill'. Credit: Historic England

Championing environmental sustainability

The restoration project is a flagship for sustainability, demonstrating how historic buildings can be reused and how technology can help heritage sites tackle the climate crisis.

The renovation has made use of:

- a ground-source heat pump
- natural lighting and ventilation
- old materials – tiles from the site's earliest days as a flax mill have been incorporated into window ledges



'Grandparent' of skyscrapers

"We are thrilled to have supported the redevelopment of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings with a grant of £20.7m, made possible thanks to National Lottery players."

Robyn Llewellyn, Director, England, Midlands & East at The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Built in 1797, the Grade I listed Main Mill is the world's first multi-storey, cast iron-framed building. This innovation by architect Charles Bage is now described as the forerunner or 'grandparent' to the modern skyscraper, paving the way for buildings such as Manhattan's Empire State Building.

Following the site's beginnings as a flax mill and major local employer from 1797 to 1886, it was repurposed into a modern maltings. From 1897 to 1987 it converted grain into malt for brewing, whisky making and vinegar production. The site was also used as a temporary army barracks during the Second World War.



19th century image of the site after it had been adapted for use as a maltings. Credit: Shropshire Archives

Thanks to National Lottery players

Robyn Llewellyn, Director of England, Midlands & East at The National Lottery Heritage Fund said: “We are thrilled to have supported the redevelopment of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings with a grant of £20.7m, made possible thanks to National Lottery players.

“I would also like to thank Historic England and The Friends of Flaxmill Maltings for their tireless efforts in bringing this important heritage site back to life, ensuring its trailblazing history is preserved for all to celebrate.”

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