

Still Pond

Bessbrook, United Kingdom

Know ye the fame of the bright little river
Which floweth through Bessbrook from moorland
and lea?
Between blue waving flax-flowers and rushes which
quiver,
He runs his short course from the lake to the sea.

This is the opening verse of "The Ballad of Camlough River", by James N. Richardson, which was used as inspiration when designing the sculpture for the mill pond. Today saw the launch of Bessbrook's Flax Flower stainless steel sculpture by artist Alan Burke. This opening verse sets the scene of the origins of Camlough river. The river that flows from Camlough lake, born of fire and ice, to be harnessed at Bessbrook pond to power the mill in Bessbrook, which in turn drove the local economy, forging communities and a social scene that survives to this day.

Key to this all is the flax plant. Without it, the river may have ran its course to the sea largely unmentioned. The production, processing and eventual weaving of the fibre from this plant is why the river rose to fame. The geography of the area, the quality of the water and the ability to grow flax locally, conspired to grow the linen industry in the locality of Bessbrook.



Picture courtesy of Alan Burke

The artwork also has a woven pattern fabricated into its structure representative of the linen industry which used the flax as its raw material. This was also used to form the basis of a community project with local schools that highlights the woven and intertwined nature of different communities within

the area. Reminding each other of the common ground of a shared history and heritage.

Rosemary Mulholland, Chairperson of the Bessbrook Heritage Group said, "With the demise of linen production in the mid 1900s, fields of blue-flowered flax no longer appear in our countryside. Most people have never seen the one plant which was essential to the creation of villages like Bessbrook. This amazing sculpture will be a constant reminder and celebration of the flax which was grown throughout the Bessbrook and Camlough areas, spun and woven here in the Mill and exported all over the world."

Environment:	park side
Use:	main body
Material:	316 with a double-sided mirror finish
Manufacturer:	John Desmond Ltd.
Artist:	Alan Burke
Photographs:	Alan Burke
More information:	johndesmond.com



Picture courtesy of Alan Burke