B09 (NEW) Entry Sign, A1, vertical on two poles, single sided Coppice car park General intro, Parks

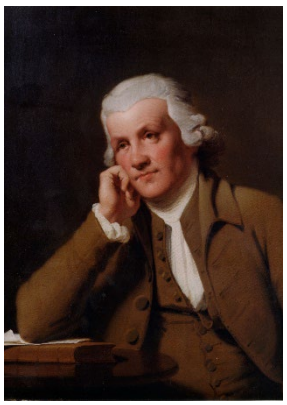
Welcome to Belper

Belper is part of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. This board is one of a series about features of interest in this internationally important landscape and the people who lived here and shaped it.

The World Heritage Site runs for 15 miles along the Derwent Valley between Matlock Bath and Derby. Look out for more interpretation boards which will help you explore the mill communities.

The map will help you to find the other boards in Belper, as well as supplementary information points (waterwheel plaques) which have information and a weblink to more about Belper's history.

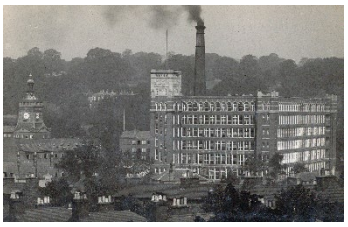
Belper – A vibrant town with a rich history



Here in Belper, Jedidiah Strutt (pictured) and his sons began their pioneering cotton mill business, and by building and buying homes and facilities for their workers created one of the world's first industrial communities.

Belper was not just known for cotton spinning – its industrial heritage dates back hundreds of years, and was highly diverse. Two of Britain's largest hosiery producers were based here throughout the 19th century, whilst nail-making in the town lasted several centuries.

The Mills



Standing at the northern entrance to Belper is the mill complex, including William Strutt's North Mill of 1804. Although overshadowed by the vast East Mill of 1912, Strutt's North Mill was constructed using pioneering 'fireproof' technology. By the mills is the impressive horseshoe weir, as well as the beautiful River Gardens, gifted to the town by the Strutt family.

The Town Centre



Take a stroll around the town centre to discover independent and traditional shops, and a range of eateries. Belper was winner of the Market Town Category and 'Winner of Winners' in the first Great British High Street Awards in 2014. A contributing factor was the World Heritage Site's Ambassador Scheme. Ambassadors in the shops and businesses will help you get the most from your visit. Look out for vinyl logos in shop windows and pop in to talk to staff. Belper was 'Best High Street in England' in the Great British High Street Awards in 2019, recognising its continuing improvements.

The Deer Park



Behind you is The Parks, once the smallest deer park in the Duffield Frith, a hunting forest given to the De Ferrers family following the Norman Invasion of 1066, for services to the new king, William I. The Frith eventually became Crown property. The last time deer were recorded in the park was before 1580. The Crown sold off the deer park, and other parts of the Frith, in the 17th century. After this time, the land was farmed, until becoming a public park and nature reserve.

The Manor House

Known as Bradley or Bradelei until about 1230, Belper became Beaurepeir at that point, meaning pleasant retreat in Norman French. It is likely to refer to the hunting lodge, later manor house, built in the Coppice area in the 1220s. The term gradually corrupted to the present day 'Belper'. Royalty stayed at the hunting lodge, including a number of English Kings, before John O'Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, built a superior lodge near Mugginton. The Manor House became disused, and from the 17th century, was used as a source of stone for new buildings. There is nothing left of the building, and some doubt as to its exact location.

Look out

Mill owner George Henry Strutt paved Belper Market Place in stone, in 1881. To show their gratitude, the Belper people raised funds for a memorial drinking fountain to be built in the centre, as a tribute to his kindness. Unfortunately, it was never plumbed in, but if you take a look at it as you pass through the Market Place, look out for the lions' heads on the memorial, which have sat, waiting to provide water, for over 140 years!

For more information

Click on the QR code or use this link: www.derwentvalleymills.org/belper

Where from here?

On the left, this exit will take you into the Market Place. Use the crossing on the far side of the Market Place, then turn left to reach Belper's main shopping area, King Street.

Logos:

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