Welcome to
BELPER

part of the DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Derwent Valley Mills Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2001

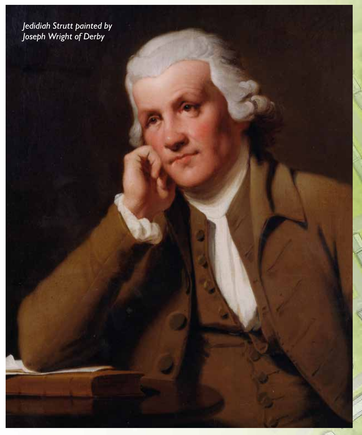
DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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.



Jedidiah Strutt painted by Joseph Wright of Derby

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.

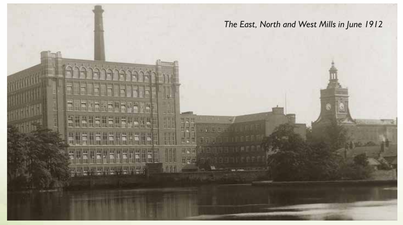
Belper was not just known for cotton spinning – its industrial heritage dates back hundreds of years, and was highly diverse. Two of Britain's largest hosiery producers were based here throughout the 19th century, whilst nail-making in the town lasted several centuries.

LOOK OUT

Behind you, beyond the car park is the Lion Hotel – this was once the Red Lion, a coaching inn. In the 18th century it was thatched, and horse-drawn coaches would break their journey here, as they crossed the country.

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 'fire proof' 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 East, North and West Mills in June 1912

THE FORGE

Belper's largest forge was on Field Lane, opposite where the car park entrance is now. During the First World War it was run by Albert Wigley. After complaining to the Government about a lack of army contracts, in 1916 he suddenly received an order for 80,000 horseshoes – he needed to find ten extra blacksmiths, at 36 shillings wage per week, and his wife had to pitch in to meet the order – but they did it.



Albert Wigley's Forge on Field Lane

WHERE FROM HERE?

Behind you, walk back to the car park entrance, cross the road and down to the main A6 road. A short walk will take you to the mill complex and River Gardens.

On your right, the tree-lined channel down the side of the supermarket building will bring you out on King Street, Belper's main shopping street.

INFORMATION POINTS (waterwheel plaques)

HERITAGE BOARDS

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.

DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

New to the area?

Come inside and we'll answer your questions on what to see and do

We're visitor friendly!

STOCKINGS FOR A QUEEN

One of the best-known hosiers of the 19th and 20th centuries was George Brettle and Co. Their main Chapel Street premises are now the home of outlet shop De Bradelei Mill, a short walk if you turn left at the bottom of King Street. Brettles provided stockings for Queen Victoria and King George III, as well as the vest worn by Lord Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar.

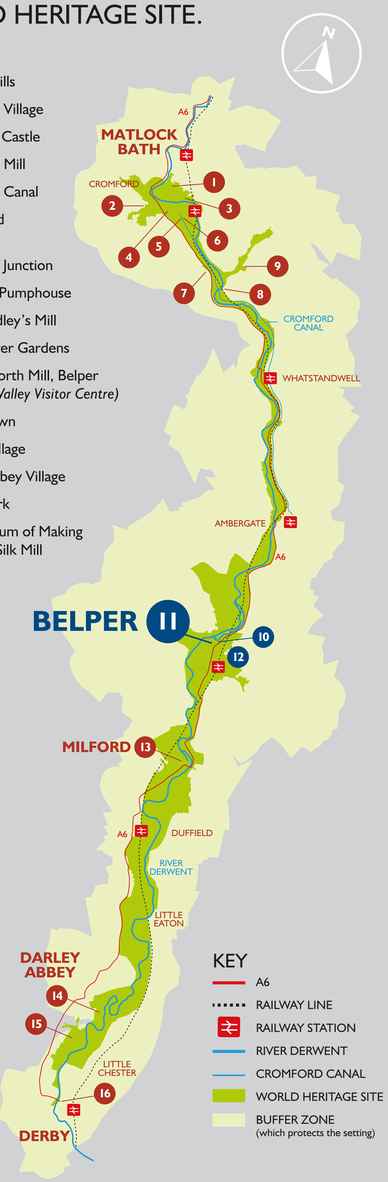
Charity Auction for the Red Cross at Belper Cattle Market during the Second World War

THE FIELD LANE CAR PARK

This land used to be known as the Smithfield, and was used for allotments, as well as a cattle market, which closed in 1965.

PLACES TO EXPLORE IN THE DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE.

1. Masson Mills
2. Cromford Village
3. Willersley Castle
4. Cromford Mill
5. Cromford Canal
6. Birdswood *(Trip Boat)*
7. High Peak Junction
8. Leawood Pumphouse
9. John Smedley's Mill
10. Belper River Gardens
11. Strutt's North Mill, Belper *(Derwent Valley Visitor Centre)*
12. Belper Town
13. Milford Village
14. Darley Abbey Village
15. Darley Park
16. The Museum of Making at Derby Silk Mill



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BELPER

Click on the QR code or use this link:

www.derwentvalleymills.org/belper

Belper Historical Society

HERITAGE FUND
LOTTERY FUNDED