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.

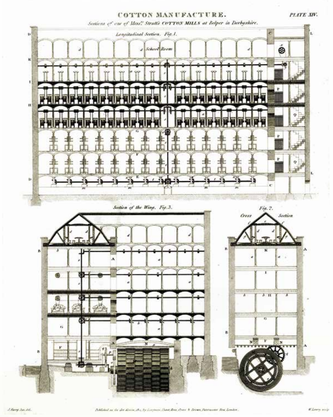
This board is one of a series about features of interest in this internationally important landscape and the people who lived here and shaped it.

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.

INFORMATION POINTS (waterwheel plaques)

HERITAGE BOARDS

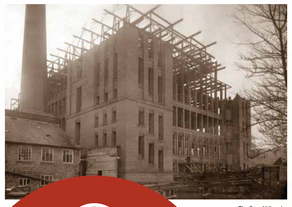


THE NORTH MILL

William Strutt (son of Jedidiah) developed ground-breaking, fire-proofed industrial buildings. After the original North Mill burnt down, he replaced it in 1804, developing an adjustable iron frame for its construction. It still stands today, near the bridge. This idealised c.1809 illustration of its structure for the Rees Cyclopaedia was designed to impress, rather than truly represent the workings of the mill.

THE EAST MILL

As the date on the East Mill water tower declares, it was completed in 1912. Seven storeys high and lit by 33 windows on each floor, 180 steel beams were used in its construction, and four million Accrington Red bricks. Nearly 200 men were employed to build it, working without scaffolding, instead balancing on the steel structure. The East Mill closed in 1986, bringing on-site cotton thread production to an end after 210 years.



The East Mill under construction in 1911/12

LOOK OUT

When you reach the East Mill, you will be able to see it stands on stilts in the water channels – there wasn't enough land for such a large building.

GLOBAL COTTON CONNECTIONS

Members of the Strutt family supported abolition of the slave trade and slavery itself but they still purchased raw cotton from plantations in Brazil, the Caribbean and the southern states of America that used enslaved African labourers. The demand for raw cotton helped drive the trade in enforced labour from Africa and encouraged the expansion of cotton plantations, worked by enslaved people, in the Americas.



Origins of raw cotton supplies bought by the Strutts, 1794-1817 (based on cotton bag data from Fitton and Wadsworth, 1958)

The Round Mill shortly before demolition





The Jubilee Clock Tower. Image: Malcolm Neaum

THE ROUND MILL AND CLOCK TOWER

Two of the most distinctive buildings within the Belper Mill Complex were the Round Mill and the Jubilee Clock Tower. The Round Mill was unique, shaped to allow one overseer on each floor. The clock tower commemorated the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897. Both were demolished by the English Sewing Cotton Company – the Round Mill in 1959 and the clock tower in 1962.



The Gangway footbridge

THE GANGWAY

The oldest surviving structure on the main mill site is the Gangway, the covered stone footway over the main road. Built in 1795, it allowed millworkers to cross from one side of the road to the other without leaving the mill complex. Gun-holes were added later, so that the mills could be defended by soldiers in case of an attack by mill-wreckers. Thankfully, no attack ever came.

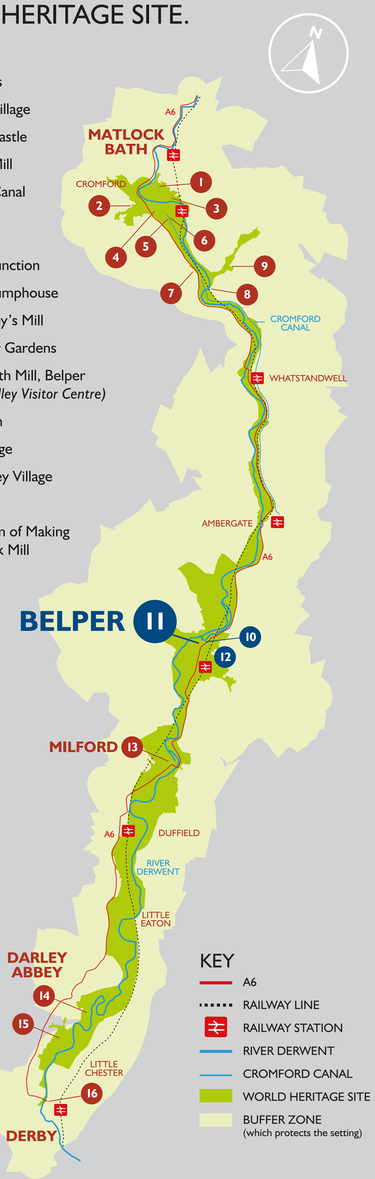
WHERE FROM HERE?

Head under the Gangway footbridge and you will come to the impressive Horseshoe Weir, and the Strutt's North Mill Museum.

Cross the road and take the road on the right – the first break in the wall will lead you into the River Gardens.

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





BELPER – ONE OF THE WORLD'S EARLIEST INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITIES

Jedidiah Strutt painted by Joseph Wright of Derby

Here in Belper, Jedidiah Strutt (pictured) and his sons began their pioneering cotton mill business, powered by the River Derwent. Jedidiah had already helped fund Richard Arkwright's Cromford Mill and recognised the value and technical challenges of mass cotton production. By building and buying homes and facilities for their workers, they went on to create one of the world's earliest industrial communities.

BELPER ROTARY

This panel replaces a previous interpretation panel, one of Belper's earliest, provided by the Rotary Club of Belper & Duffield in October 2001. The club remains active in the town and can be contacted via their website **www.belper-rotary.co.uk**

THE TOWN CENTRE

Take a stroll around the town centre to discover independent and traditional shops, and a range of eateries. Belper has twice been a winner in the Great British High Street Awards. 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.

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!

THE RIVER GARDENS

Beyond the mills are the River Gardens, where the Derwent provides the setting to a distinctive promenade, and boating is available in the summer.

An early event at the River Gardens c.1908

The German field gun (far left) on display in The triangle, 1919

THE TRIANGLE

This is The Triangle, where the Matlock and Ashbourne roads meet on the route to Derby. It was created when cottages at the junction were removed in 1914. For a while after the First World War, a German field gun was placed here, in recognition of Belper having a Victoria Cross holder – Gunner Charles Stone.

BRIDGE STREET

Bridge Street is an old route, part of a turnpike road. It is narrow in places, as it pre-dates the motor vehicle. There have been attempts to solve the traffic congestion through proposals of road-widenings, demolition and by-passes, but it remains little changed since the first call for improvements was made in 1923.

If you walk along the A6 towards King Street, Belper's main shopping area, look out for the former Trustee Savings Bank, now a private house.



Bridge Street before the First World War

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BELPER

Click on the QR code or use this link:

www.derwentvalleymills.org/belper

BHS Belper Historical Society

HERITAGE FUND LOTTERY FUNDED