



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This leaflet is one of a series of local interest leaflets produced by the Tourism and Recreation Department, Amber Valley Borough Council.

Written by members of Belper Historical Society.

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**CARING AND WORKING
FOR AMBER VALLEY**

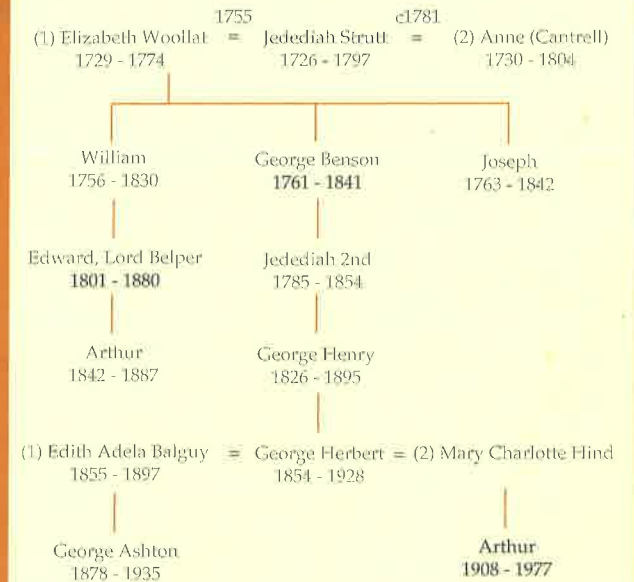
The Strutt Walk & Drive



Jedediah Strutt 1726 - 1797

The Strutt Family Tree

Abstract showing the Strutts who were directly connected with Belper.
Siblings are not included.
Wives are not included unless there was a second marriage.



THE STRUTT WALK AND DRIVE

The walk is 2 miles, but a pleasant extension is described which adds another mile to it. Belper is hilly, so disabled people may not be able to walk the whole distance, but most of the places visited are accessible by car; where not will be specially mentioned. All the properties mentioned are private or commercial, so it would be appreciated if the occupant's privacy could be respected. The amount of driving is about 5 miles, but car parking can be difficult.

Both the drive and the walk start from The River Gardens car park, which is off the Matlock Road (A6), immediately north of the large red-brick mill, on the same side. Enter the opening in the wall but drive down to the car park. The River Gardens were created in 1905/6. During the summer, you may wish to take a boat from there, northwards along the picturesque Derwent Valley or you can enjoy the gardens or listen to a band concert on Sundays. The maps show the location of interesting features, which are numbered. They should allow the walk to be shortened if necessary.

JEDEDIAH STRUTT

Jedediah Strutt was born of farming stock in South Normanton in 1726. He married Elizabeth Woollat whose family had a hosiery business in Derby. Jedediah's early prosperity was based on his invention in 1759 of an attachment which made it possible to do ribbed knitting on an ordinary hand-operated knitting frame. This became famous as the "Derby Rib" and gave a great boost to the whole East Midlands hosiery industry.

Some ten years later Jedediah was wealthy enough to risk giving financial backing to Richard Arkwright, the ex-barber, who had come to Nottingham to promote the commercial development of his cotton-spinning machine, the "Water Frame". Their first factory - the world's first water-powered cotton spinning mill - was set up at Cromford in 1771 and a second mill was built in Belper in 1776. This was the beginning of the association of the Strutt family with Belper, and the impetus for this small village to become, by 1801, the second largest town in Derbyshire.

Jedediah ended his partnership with Arkwright in 1781 but his own business enterprises flourished. In 1780 Milford was chosen as the site for his second mill and new buildings, mills and warehouses followed in both Belper and Milford every few years. The original North Mill was burnt down in 1803 and was immediately replaced by a new North Mill, the building which is still standing near the Belper Bridge. This was one of the earliest fireproof structures, designed by William, Jedediah's eldest son. He used cast iron columns and beams, and the floors were of brick or, for the top floor, "Flower Pots" which combined strength with lightness. Jedediah died in 1797, leaving three sons, William, George and Joseph to continue the very successful business interests in Derby, but Belper became the "Kingdom" of the Strutts.

Jedediah Strutt and his sons transformed the economy of Belper, the lives of the people and the appearance of the town. Apart from employing people in cotton spinning, the Mills created job opportunities in the transport and building trades and brought about the need to improve roads and postal services. Shopkeepers and other small tradesmen benefited from the ever-increasing population.

Jedediah himself was a Unitarian and built the Unitarian Chapel in Field Row in 1788. The family were major subscribers to the building of St. Peter's Parish Church in 1822 when the population outgrew the thirteenth century Anglican Chapel of St. John the Baptist. The Strutts also took the lead in providing education, first by Sunday Schools at their mills and, by 1811, in day schools in Belper and Milford. In the early days they supplied milk and other produce to their employees at reasonable prices.

To attract and retain good workers, acceptable housing at a reasonable rent had to be provided. The first industrial housing was built near the mills in Long Row, Short Row and Mill Street, followed by the unique four-house blocks known as "The Clusters", and other workers' houses in Milford. Members of the Strutt family had their own grand residences - Milford House; Bridge Hill House; Green Hall; Makeney House; St. Helen's House and Exeter House in Derby; also Kingston on Soar Hall. Their farms, Crossroads Farm near Belper and Moscow Farm between Milford and Duffield were models of up-to-date agricultural practice.

As wealthy employers and landlords, the Strutts played a dominant part in the lives of people in Belper and Milford, using their considerable power and influence to promote hard work, sobriety and respectability. It was to be expected that some people should resent their success and be critical of any assumption of superiority on their part. It could not be denied, however, that the descendants of Jedediah Strutt continued his tradition of public generosity.

One such benevolent gesture was the presentation of the Arboretum to the people of Derby as a public park by Joseph Strutt in 1840. In Belper many improvements were originated and funded by the Strutts:- The Market Place was paved in 1881; around the turn of the century a satisfactory water supply was provided for the town with the pumping station in the Meadows and Bessalone reservoir; land was given as a site for the Ridgeway Isolation Hospital on Crich Lane; Belper River Gardens were created as a public park; The Herbert Strutt School and the adjoining swimming baths were built and the newly created Belper Urban District Council was given its offices in King Street.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, cotton spinning in Belper and Milford has suffered the same set-backs as the rest of the cotton industry, with the competition from overseas and from man-made fibres. Spinning in Belper finally ceased in 1991.

If Jedediah Strutt had not chosen to build his first mill in Belper it would probably have remained a village, declining even further as hand-made nails gave way to mass-production elsewhere. Jedediah Strutt selected Samuel Slater to live with him to be trained to manage the factories. On the completion of his apprenticeship, Samuel emigrated to America and, joining with two men who were trying to spin cotton, set up a mill in Pawtucket. This was the beginning of American cotton spinning and possibly the start of mass production.

THE WALK ROUND "STRUTT BELPER"

Rejoin the main road and turn right. At the Triangle (traffic lights), turn into Long Row on the left. The school (1) is on the site of the first school, founded by Strutts about 1807, using the Lancasterian system of education. This continued the Sunday schooling which Jedediah had introduced in the North Mill attic about 1786.

The houses in Long Row (2) were built in 1793-5. The houses were numbered before 1836, when the coming of the railway necessitated the demolition of several houses. The loss of these houses is evident from the missing numbers. An unusual feature in the houses on the left hand side, not visible from the outside, is that the wall between pairs of odd and even numbers, is stepped sideways so that their staircases could be built in the same front-to-back line. The function of the stone stumps outside the houses is thought to be to stop the wheel hubs of carts from smashing the railings which were in front of the houses.

Turn into Green Lane, where the next three streets on the right are named after Jedediah Strutt's sons, William, George and Joseph, in order of seniority.

Turn left into Field Row where, behind trees, is the Unitarian Chapel (3). This was built by Jedediah Strutt in 1788, later to be extended and to include the Chapel House, which actually forms part of the Chapel building. There is an unusual stone cantilevered staircase on the outside, giving access to the balcony. The pews are stepped; the left side is over the vault for "interment" and the other is over the house kitchen and coal store. The Strutts entered by a private entrance in Short Row (4) to occupy the rear seats. This can be seen if you retrace your steps. Short Row was one of the first streets to be built by the Strutts, to meet the need for houses for their workers.

Opposite Field Row is Joseph Street. Go down this to the building abutting the roadway, which was an old nailers' workshop (5). Jedediah required a workforce mainly made up of girls, so he tried to attract families with a lot of them. This meant that he had to find work for the husbands if at all possible. Locally nails had been made by hand for centuries, and it is likely that this workshop would have provided work for three husbands. Similarly, framework knitting was another old trade in Belper and a Knitter's workshop (6) is also in Joseph Street. The characteristic feature of these workshops is a large number of windows to let in enough light for the very eye-straining work. It is not a good example and overlooks the railway cutting, on the far side, to the right of Joseph Street.

The Strutt houses (7), built about 1805, between Joseph and George Streets are unusual because they are in the form of

"Clusters" of four. This has given the name of "The Clusters" to the area. Continue to the bottom of Joseph Street, into Cluster Road. At their junction is Crown Terrace (8), another Strutt development of some architectural merit, particularly on the left hand side. Turn and walk up George Street; the houses in it are of various styles and dates. At the top, turn right along Green Lane.

St. Peter's Church (9) in Church Lane is the C of E Parish Church, opened in 1824, to which the Strutts made substantial contributions. Continuing along Green Lane you pass the original Unitarian School room (10) (1721), then a single storey building, now Robeys Fire and Tool Hire store.

The car park is on the site of Green Hall (11), the home of Jedediah Strutt (2nd) in 1810, when he married. Opposite were the stables (12) for the Hall, now a Doctors' surgery. On the other side of King Street (ahead) is the paddock (13) belonging to the Hall, later to become the War Memorial Gardens. In 1832 Jedediah built a bridge over King Street to give better access and to celebrate the passing of the Reform Act; the bridge was demolished in 1867.

Turn right into King Street. On the right, immediately after the Gas Showrooms, is a tall stone building (14), which was the Crompton and Evans Bank. It was presented to the town by George Henry Strutt when the Urban District Council was created in 1895.

Turn right along Bridge Street on the left pavement. Immediately before the garage is a row of Strutt houses (15) which have been re-fronted. Opposite the George Hotel, look above the Clusters Art Gallery (16), for the "Saving's Bank" stone carving. Strutt was a founder and trustee of this bank, later to become a branch of the Trustee Saving Bank.

At the Triangle take the road (A517) forward towards Ashbourne. The large red-brick building (17) is the "East Mill"; this was built by the English Sewing Cotton Co in 1912 and ALL the brickwork was done by leaning over from the inside steel frame without using external scaffolding.

The low building in the car park is a hydro-electric power station using the water supply which fed the original South Mill (18) (rebuilt 1813) and the structure itself is a remnant of the later mill.

Pass under the bridge (19) over the road (locally known as "The Gangway"), which was built in 1795. This bridge is continued by a corridor alongside the road. Look up the walls to the embrasures through which firearms could be fired at rioters.

The tall building (20) ("North Mill") nearest to the weir, dates from 1804, and is of iron framed construction with brick arches used for the floors. It replaced one (1786) which was

destroyed by fire, a very common hazard about that time in the spinning industry. The building is the SECOND OLDEST OF ITS TYPE REMAINING IN THE WORLD.

The road continues over the River Derwent bridge, built in 1796, to replace an earlier one which was damaged by a flood.

The weir (21) was built by the Strutts in 1797 but was raised in 1819 to increase the storage capacity. The 1776 weir, which powered the original (South) mill was just upstream of the railway bridge; this was demolished, presumably when the present weir was built.

Just beyond the river bridge is a house (22) that was a convalescent home supported by the Strutts; originally it was three cottages. On the other side of the road is Green Walk (23), which was a private short cut from Bridge Hill; the public were allowed to use it, provided that Strutt wasn't there. Overlooking the mill, on the hillside was Bridge Hill House (24) built by George Benson Strutt in 1793 and demolished about 1938.

The walk can be extended by about one mile at this point to the Strutt Water Works, but the path passes through stiles and two fields, so it is occasionally muddy and is inaccessible for the disabled (see the NOTE in the drive section). Otherwise return to the River Gardens.

Follow the main path by the side of the river until it crosses the Black Brook. From the last field before the trees, the Strutt Water Works (25) can be seen to the right. This was donated to the Town by George Herbert Strutt. When it was completed in 1901 it was powered by a steam engine, then by a single cylinder Diesel engine and finally by electricity. The water comes from a well under the buildings.

Just past the brook, turn right up the avenue of trees, (which were part of Strutts drive from Bridge Hill House), from which there are more views of the water works. The road turning right from the avenue of trees is STRICTLY PRIVATE, but the way forward is a public right of way. Retracing your steps, before crossing the brook, continue forward to look at the private river bridge (26), which formed part of a private road built by a Strutt to by-pass Belper from the south.

Return to the River Gardens (27) which were built in 1905-6, by the Belper Boating Association, on an osier bed, given by G. Herbert Strutt, who was also the Chairman of the Association. The Gardens are now the property of the Amber Valley Borough Council. The original (1776) mill lade is now under the childrens' playground and the ornamental pond.

THE DRIVE

Drive past the mills (A517), turning left up Bridge Hill. Beyond the summit, just past the last house, where it is safe to stop, look over the meadows on the left to the Strutt Water Works (25), donated by George Herbert Strutt, along with reservoirs, etc. From the same vantage point a Strutt Model Farm (28), Cross Roads Farm, is on the left side of the road. At one time it was the Owl Inn. Jedediah Strutt, who came from farming stock, had fresh food grown at the farm, for the welfare of his

workers. The route goes past this, where you turn left towards Milford, then left again. NOTE - to see the Strutt Water Works closer, you can WALK down the first drive on the left indicated by a finger post, having parked safely just round the bend. This path is hard surfaced and passes an old water mill and converted barn. The water works are obvious just beyond on the left.

Immediately after crossing the railway, are more Strutt houses. Milford School (29) is on the left, opposite Sunny Hill. This was built about 1838, but a school was in existence before 1811 in Milford. Just beyond the exit into the main (A6) road, on the right, is Jedediah Strutt's Milford House (30), now a residential home. He built this about 1785 and he lived there until 1795. Makeney Hall (31), across the river, was the home of George Herbert Strutt, Belper's chief benefactor. Across the A6 road is the car park (32) to the Garden Centre; in this area are several remains of the demolished mills and a suspension bridge, including the water wheel pit in which the Hon. Arthur Strutt lost his life in 1887. The buildings (33) on the left of the A6 road are also part of the Strutt Milford factories. The two columns by the entrance are typical of those used in the construction of the iron-framed buildings and the bell was originally used to summon the workers to the mill in the days when clocks were a luxury.

Following the road back to Belper, Jedediah Strutt erected the river bridge about 1795 and built his private road to the Belper Mills, which later was incorporated into the Turnpike road, now the A6. Bear right at the Church and War Memorial, into Hopping Hill (34) and right at the end into Shaw Lane, where the East and West Terraces are (35), all of which are Strutt houses. The East and West Terraces are unusual, because to allow for the steep slope, the former are two storey and the latter are three. So that they have the same amount of accommodation, there are three East houses for every two West ones, even though they are back-to-back. To see them close up, park in Bridge View and walk back. The slope at the near end of the Terrace was for coal to be delivered by sliding it down the slope. For safety when you return by car, turn left along Hopping Hill, back to the War Memorial, where the exit is safe. Turn right along the A6 road.

Entering Belper, the Herbert Strutt School (36), built in 1909, is obvious on the right. This is a sympathetic interpretation of the architecture of Babington Hospital opposite. Initially a Secondary and Teacher Training School, then a Grammar School, it is now a junior school. Associated with it are the disused Swimming Baths (37) behind the School, in Gibfield Lane. Almost opposite the school is a Lodge (38) (C 1856), the tenant of which had to open the adjacent locked gate for the Strutts when they used their private drive to Bridge Hill House, from the original railway station and turnpike to the south.

The tour ends at this point, although the River Gardens is an admirable place for a picnic.

