Welcome to Milford, one of the key communities within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. It was here that Jedediah Strutt and his sons expanded the cotton spinning business they had started in Belper, and by building and buying homes and facilities for their workers created one of the world’s first industrial communities.

From the 1780s, when Jedediah Strutt began building in the ancient hamlet of New Mills, life here was dominated by the rise of the textile industry. Even today, most buildings in Milford and the neighbouring village of Makeney are linked with the area’s industrial development, and help tell the story of the workers who lived in the shadow of the mills.

In 2001, the universal significance of the textile mills beside the River Derwent was recognised when the stretch of the valley between Matlock Bath and Derby was designated a World Heritage Site. It was here that Jedediah Strutt and his sons started in Belper, and by building and buying homes and facilities for their workers created one of the world’s first industrial communities.

This leaflet gives you three options for short walks looking at some of the most significant sites in Milford and Makeney. The starting point for each walk is the interpretation board opposite the Strutt Arms on the A6 main road, which will tell you more about this industrial community, and show you how it has changed in the past two centuries.

Mr Strutt’s Cotton Mill, 1787. In the 1780s, Jedediah Strutt lived in the house shown beside his Mill. The New Mills & Makeney Forges, sited on either bank of the Derwent, were linked at that time by a chain ferry, near the present garden centre graveyard, behind the Strutt Arms Hotel. Watercolour by Zechariah Berger. Reproduced by kind permission of the Derby Museum and Art Gallery.
EAST MILFORD WALK

Keeping to the pavement opposite the Strutt Arms, walk to the bridge. The buildings to your left are all that remain of the old Milford Mill complex. The footprint of the mills is no longer traceable, but two wheel-pits survive, one either side of The Mill House public house, and the generator in the small brick building between the pits, can usually be heard. Water power is still harnessed for energy supplies. The group facing you, under the cliff at the eastern end of the bridge, were developed after enclosure of the common land in 1791.

The former Ebenezer Chapel, on the right, was converted in 1859 from the Durham Ox beerhouse, built in 1846 by Henry Bragginton. The neighbouring King William pub was built around 1830 on land purchased by the Belper surveyor and architect John Hutton. Further north, the Recreation Ground occupies an area worked as a quarry until at least 1906.

Holy Trinity Parish Church was built between 1846 and 1848 in an early English style by H. Moffat. Its unusual north-south orientation is due to the constraints of the site, donated by members of the Strutt family. It stands at the end of Hopping Hill, part of the former turnpike road named from the Old English ‘hop’, meaning a small opening off a main valley and ‘ing’ meaning a clearing. The rows here were developed in the 1790s by Jedediah Strutt to house his workers, about thirty years before the present main road was laid out by the Strutt Company. Walk northwards along Derby Road – Duke’s Buildings were constructed when the road was built on land purchased from the Duke of Devonshire.

To your left are the river and weir. This area, known as Hopping Mill, has been at various times the site of ancient forges, a corn mill, a fulling & dyeing house, a gas works and a foundry. Part of this site was purchased by Jedediah Strutt in 1781 in order to obtain the water power needed for his cotton spinning mills 500 yards down the valley.

Climb the steps by the New Inn (1792), and turn right onto Hopping Hill. Take the jitty between the rows on your left, and at the top turn right up Shaw Lane. A short way along on your right, at an angle to the road, are East & West Terraces, (1818-20). Most of this ingeniously-designed block consists of two-storey double-fronted houses on its east side, interlocking with a larger number of three-storey single-fronted houses facing across the valley.

Steps at the far end of the Terrace lead down past allotment gardens and the Church back to the War Memorial and Roll of Honour.

Retrace your steps to follow the other walks.

WEST MILFORD WALK

The Strutt Arms, opposite the Information Board, was built in 1901 on the site of a farmhouse. The free-standing wall to its left survives from before the main road was built, and was once continuous with the eastern boundary of this triangle. Walk south to Mount Pleasant, one of Milford’s oldest houses. Its gable is dated 1672, but it may be even older. Neighbouring Millford House was built for Jedediah Strutt around 1792, and was a Strutt family home for over a century.

Retrace your steps into Chevin Road. The building at the bottom of Sunny Hill now occupied by the Social Club was originally the New Inn, and later the Beehive, before being converted into Millford’s Institute and Reading Room by George Herbert Strutt, in 1902.

A short way up the hill, The Royal Oak on the right, and the adjoining houses above, were built by the Bate family on a plot allotted to their father when the common land was enclosed. The public house continued to hold a licence until the 1950s.

A few yards up on the left, nos. 15-37 form a back-to-back row, built in stages between 1791 and 1824 by entrepreneurs. Its local name, The Barracks, suggests it once housed single mill-workers living away from home.

Most of the old stone houses on Sunny Hill were built from 1792 onwards by entrepreneurs and later sold to Anthony Raftord Strutt to house his workers.

At the top of the hill, directly over the Chevin railway tunnel, stands Stephensons’ Tower. Built about 1839 by the North Midland Railway Co. (Chief Engineers: George and Robert Stephenson), it was used to signal to locomotive drivers that the tunnel, originally single-tracked, was clear to enter and later, after a second track had been laid, to prevent two trains being in the tunnel at once whilst open carriages were still in use. (Please note that there is no public access to the Tower, which stands on privately-owned land.)

Retracing the steps past the entrance to Hopping Hole quarry, is Bank Buildings, built in 1911 on the site of a 1790s row. Families were re-housed at a time while the properties were re-built by the Strutt Company. The houses have gardens across the road, on the river bank.

Returning down the hill, turn left into Well Lane to see a row of 1790s workers’ houses built by Jedediah Strutt. The well, by the bend, was hidden for many years, but rediscovered in 2002.

At the end of the lane, the Methodist Chapel (1842) has been in commercial use since the 1940s. The Baptist Chapel (1849), nearby on Chevin Road, is still used for worship - its baptismal tank survives in the basement.

Further north, past the entrance to Hopping Hole quarry, is Bank Buildings, built in 1911 on the site of a 1790s row. Families were re-housed at a time while the properties were re-built by the Strutt Company. The houses have gardens across the road, on the river bank.

Turn back southwards, and on your left is Millford School, in use since the 1820s. As the School is built into the slope, there is a lower storey at the rear, from where a gate leads to the Mill site. This was used by “half-time” children to move between work and education.

Down the steps is Chevin Alley (1793), a row whose irregular façade reflects an interlocking layout. The courses of stonework are horizontal at the front, but at the back follow the slope of the ground. The extension at No. 1 once housed a Post Office. The next-door building, on the main road, is the old Mill Canteen.