

## DISCOVER BELPER

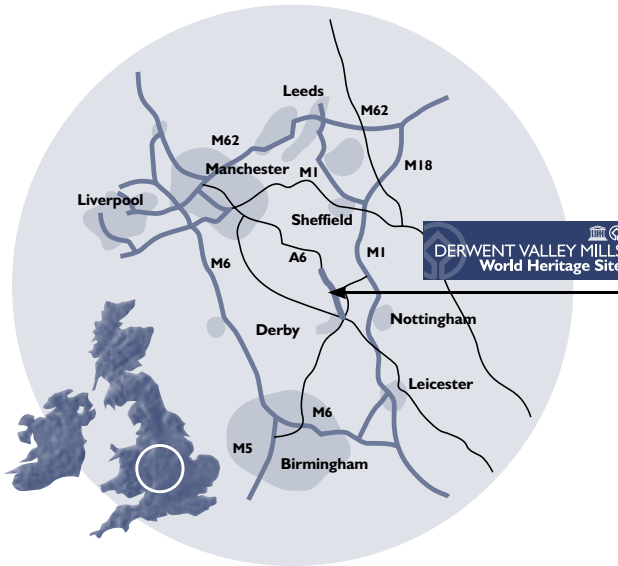
Welcome to Belper, a key community within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. It was here that Jedediah Strutt and his sons began their pioneer cotton mill business, and by building and buying homes and facilities for their workers created one of the world's first industrial communities.

The importance of the Belper mills and their historic industrial neighbours at Cromford, Darley Abbey and Derby was reflected by the World Heritage Site status given to the Derwent Valley Mills in December 2001. Belper is also within the National Heritage Corridor™.

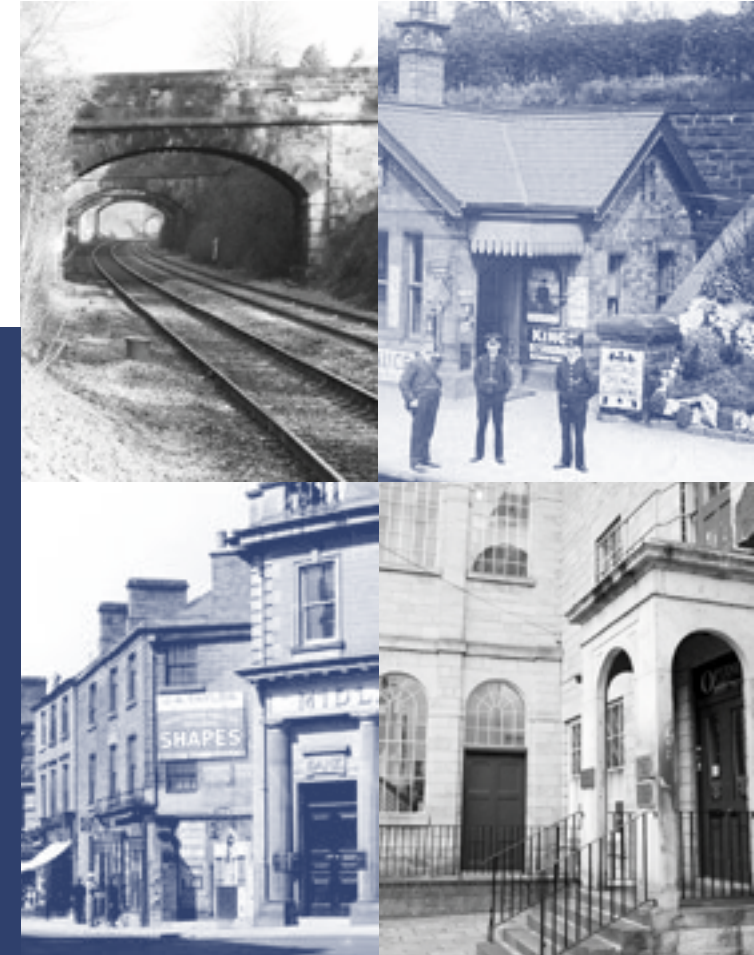
But Belper was not just known for cotton spinning – its industrial heritage dates back centuries, and was highly diverse. Two of Britain's largest hosiery producers were based in the town throughout the 19th century, whilst nailmaking in the town dates back to the Norman Conquest. From travelling caravans to cotton vests, from rope and railway cuttings to toffee and quality furniture – they were all produced in Belper, and kept thousands of people in work.

One of the best-known hosiers of the 19th and 20th centuries was George Brettle and Co. Their Chapel Street premises are now the home of De Bradelei Mill, and it is from there that this short walk through the town begins. This leaflet will help you find some of the most significant buildings in the town, and show you a little of Belper's industrial past, and its wider setting. The end point is the Derwent Valley Visitor Centre, inside Strutt's North Mill, where you'll find more information about the town. It is then just a short walk back to the De Bradelei Mill complex.

At De Bradelei Mill you will find an interpretation board which will tell you more about this industrial community, and its links to the hosiery industry.



## HERITAGE WALK 2 BELPER



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For more information on Belper visit [www.derwentvalleymills.org](http://www.derwentvalleymills.org)

For tourist information call 01773 841488  
or visit [www.visitambervalley.com](http://www.visitambervalley.com)

Front cover (clockwise from top left): the 1840 road bridges over the railway; the station staff 100 years ago; De Bradelei Mill; the King Street junction before World War One.

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# INDUSTRIAL BELPER

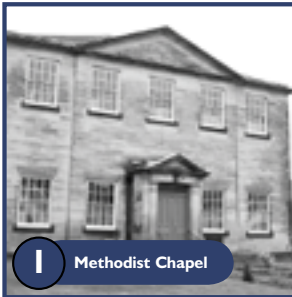
Belper has a strong industrial past, with cotton spinning, hosiery production, nail-making and the iron foundries providing thousands of jobs for many, many years. This walk begins at **De Bradelei Mill**, the one time HQ of George Brettle and Co, once one of the most renowned manufacturers of hosiery and other cotton goods. On this site, stockings were once produced for George III and his grand-daughter Queen Victoria, and it is said the cotton vest worn by Admiral Horatio Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 was a Brettle vest. The interpretation board under the arches leading to the car park will tell you more about the company.

Walk through the large arch on to the main road – this is the A6, which follows the line of the turnpike road provided between Derby and Manchester in 1816-18. From the archway, look right and you will see the large gritstone **warehouse** of 1850 on the far side of the roundabout. This belonged to Wards, another major hosiery company

Turn left, walking along the A6 towards the town centre. Next to De Bradelei Mill is the **Central Methodist Chapel** of 1807.

Continue along the road, past King Street. Turn left onto Derwent Street and walk down until you reach the former Thorntons factory on the left. The toffee manufacturer came to Belper in 1947. Before then it was a blouse factory but it began life as a theatre, where Gracie Fields once performed. Opposite the factory is the entrance to **Unity Mill**. Walk through to see the corn mill built in 1839 by James Webster and greatly enlarged by John Strutt from 1853. It was later converted to cotton spinning, then became a furniture manufacturers but is now an antiques centre.

Return to Bridge Street (the A6), cross the road and walk under the arch by the Frearson's shop into **Wellington Court**. On the



1 Methodist Chapel



2 Unity Mill

left is Wellington House where Will Hay, star of Ealing film comedies, stayed as he began his career in Belper. At the end of the stone terrace follow the road ahead past the supermarket to the railway station of 1878. On the platforms you can see the recesses which once held the station buildings, and beyond these, looking north, the five road bridges which cross the stone-lined cutting designed by George Stephenson.

Walk up the steps from the platform and follow the footpath which runs parallel to the platform, until you come out on Field Lane. Cross the road onto another path running parallel to the railway cutting. This is **The Ropewalk**, so called because it runs at right-angles to a former ropewalk used for rope-plaiting, which ran along the back of the houses.

At the end of ropewalk we are in **Joseph Street** – part of the industrial housing built by the Strutts. Note the Telford/Macadam type road surfacing to the right of you – a rare survival.

Turn left and walk down the road until you reach No 3 Clusters Court – opposite is a channel to George Street. Walk along it. As you pass through the channel note the old workshop on your left, now converted into a house. Although the Strutts primarily only wanted women and children in the mills, they provided workplaces like these for men so that whole families would want to settle in the town.

At end of the channel turn left, past more cluster houses, then at the bottom of the road turn right. You are now in Clusters Road. Past the **Drill Hall** of 1902 on the left is Piggy Hill, the channel running down to the main road, so-called as from 1896 it was used by butcher Edward Ryde to herd in his fresh stocks of pigs.

Carry on to the end of Clusters Road and turn and turn left onto **Long Row**. On the right as you walk down to the A6 is Long Row School, provided by the Strutts for the community in 1818. In front of you, across the road, is **Christ Church** of 1850, another Strutt provision for the town. Bear right and cross the road at the crossing.



3 Drill Hall

You are now in **The Triangle**, where there is an interpretation panel on the mills and surrounding area. On the left is Pym's, a solicitor's office which was once the mill armoury. Cross the road again, this time towards the big red mill, the **East Mill** of 1912. Turn left and under the bridge linking the buildings on opposite sides of the road. This is the Gangway of 1795. Carry on along the road, turning right at the sign for the Derwent Valley Visitor Centre. You will find more information on Belper's industrial past at the centre in Strutt's North Mill, where tours of the mill are also available.

To return to De Bradelei Mill simply return to The Triangle, turn right and follow the A6 road.

