

save OUR BELPER MILLS



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www.ourbelpermills.co.uk

Useful background:

LISTED BUILDINGS

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) maintain a list of buildings which may not be demolished, extended or altered without special permission from the local planning authority (Amber Valley Borough Council). There are three grades of listing from; Grade I (the most significant and therefore most protected), then Grade II*, to Grade II. 92% of listed buildings are Grade II which indicates the extra importance of the Grade I listing of North Mill and the grade II* listing of the footbridge and weirs.

WORLD HERITAGE SITE

1,154 sites worldwide are recognised for their national, historical or cultural significance by UNESCO, the United Nations organisation that looks after Education, Scientific and Cultural matters worldwide. UNESCO is responsible for 'inscribing' onto and, on occasion, removing a site from the list. Through a reporting process, national governments are responsible for demonstrating that they are maintaining and protecting the sites. The 33 WHS in the UK include Stonehenge, the City of Bath, Ironbridge Gorge, The Giant's Causeway and of course the Derwent Valley Mills.

BELPER NORTH MILL TRUST

The Trust is a registered charity and is run by Trustees with the support of an experienced and committed volunteer base and two part time staff. They aim to celebrate, interpret and educate about the DVMWHS with a particular focus on Belper. The charity operates both a museum and visitor centre at Belper North Mill. Pre-covid the museum would have around 4,000 visitors a year in the museum and on our walks and talks. A further 2,000 visit the visitor centre. As of August 2022 the museum is due to close at the end of September 2022 due to termination of the lease with First Investments.

For more details and background visit:
Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site DVMWHS
www.derwentvalleymills.org
DVMWHS Management Plan
managementplan.derwentvalleymills.org
Belper North Mill: North Mill Trust
www.belpernorthmill.org.uk/north-mill-trust/
UNESCO
whc.unesco.org/en/list/1030
Belper Neighbourhood Plan
www.ambervalley.gov.uk/belperneighbourhoodplan
Amber Valley Borough Council Adopted Local Plan
www.ambervalley.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/adopted-local-plan/
First Investments' website for the Belper Mills
www.belpermills.co.uk

Further Reading

IMAGE REFERENCES:

1. Derwent Valley Mills
2. Visit Peak District
3. Belper North Mill Trust
4. George Jones [2022]
5. Belper North Mill Trust

6. Derbyshire Library Services 1990]
7. George Jones [2022]
8. Belper North Mill Trust



ABOUT OUR BELPER MILLS

Our Belper Mills is a community group formed to help represent the public voice alongside the key organisations involved. Born out of Transition Belper's 'Community Conversation' 2021, where the issue of the mills emerged as one of the most significant challenges facing the town. Our group plans to work alongside, but independently from, the existing interested parties to secure the future of the historic mills for a series of exemplary, sustainable uses which will reinforce and complement the existing business and residential community.

This leaflet aims to start a wide, inclusive community exchange, whilst informing and pointing to further information and action we can all take.

Help us to break the impasse which has dogged the future of Belper's 'jewel-in-the-crown.' SAVE OUR HISTORIC MILLS!

Belper is a market town in central Derbyshire close to Derby, the Derbyshire Dales, and the Peak District. The town dates back to medieval times but the community as we know it was largely built on its 18th century cotton industry. This dominant industry saw a gradual decline through the 19th century as operations gravitated to the industrial centres of Manchester and Liverpool. A more drastic decline in the fortunes of the town followed as the remaining industry disappeared in the last decades of the 20th century.

World Heritage status for the Derwent Valley was a massive boost to the morale of the town in 2001 and Belper has lately seen a hugely successful retail and heritage-led regeneration, culminating in the Best Great British High Street in England in 2014 and 2019.

CHALLENGES FACING THE MILL

CONDITION

Approximately 50% of the historic East site's and 100% of the West site are currently unoccupied. The historic buildings and structures of the East site are all in a state of serious decline- the North Mill is officially a building 'at risk'. See over.

HERITAGE AT RISK

In 2021, UNESCO requested a 'State of Conservation Report' for the DVMWHS over concerns that its Outstanding Universal Value was under threat. The report will be discussed by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee at its next meeting. Key concerns were two approved planning applications which impact on the WHS and its setting. They wanted to know what action had been taken to ensure this isn't repeated and information on other issues affecting the Site, so the state of the Belper Mills was included. UNESCO are thus aware of the situation and likely to monitor it during the 'State of Conservation' process.

OWNERSHIP

Both east and west sites are privately-owned. East Site owned by First Investments: North Mill, East Mill, Strutt House, Footbridge, Horseshoe Weir and east side watercourses.

First Investments have a planning application in for the regeneration of the east site, but it is uncertain whether they intend to carry out the development if and when permission is given.

West Site and West watercourse features are owned by Courtaulds Properties, now part of a privately owned textile manufacturer based in Hong Kong.



HISTORY

The cotton mill complex on the river crossing to the north of Belper town centre was constructed by the Strutt family whose activities and influence dominated and transformed the simple community of nail-makers and home workers from the 1770s.

Here in Belper, Jedidiah Strutt and his sons began their pioneering cotton mill business, powered by the River Derwent. Jedidiah had already helped to fund Richard Arkwright's Cromford Mill, and had 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.

While much of the original mill complex was destroyed in the 1960s, Strutt associated model workers' housing, farms and public buildings have largely survived and form a unique context to those mills and watercourses which escaped the destruction.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT PLANNING APPLICATION:

Planning Application made by First Investments, reference AVA/2018/0818, to Amber Valley Borough Council, 9th August 2018.

The application encompasses the mill site to the east of the road (Bridge Foot). As of October 2022 no decision has been made.



117 APARTMENTS



RESULTANT ACCOMMODATION

Non-residential floor space increased from 6,661m2 to 17,304m2: 10,643m2 increase
Car Parking Increased from 159 spaces to 276 spaces: 117 spaces increase

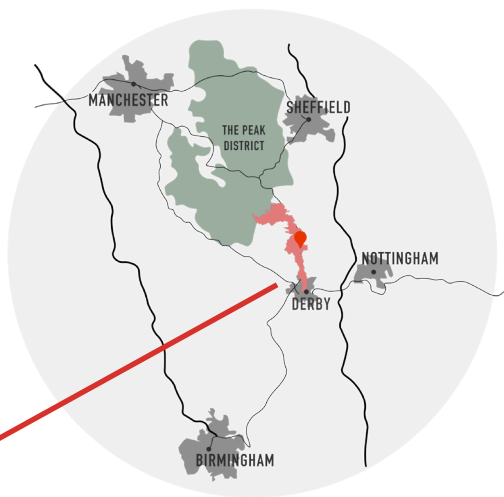
A DIFFERENT VISION: WHAT COULD BE...

There are some fabulous spaces within the surviving historic mill complex from the enormous, uninterrupted floor plates of the East Mill to the extraordinary stone-pillared basement of the North Mill.

There have been some inspiring conversions of old mills in the UK with some praised as 'exemplary' by Historic England. All the other mills of the DVMWHS have been comparatively successfully preserved, converted to varying beneficial uses which allow the presentation and interpretation of the historic structures.

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Where are we?



DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE:
The Derwent Valley, from the Silk Mill in Derby in the south to Masson Mill in Matlock Bath to the north was inscribed as a WHS in 2002 on the following criteria:

The Derwent Valley saw the birth of the factory system, when new types of building were erected to house the new technology for spinning cotton developed by Richard Arkwright.

In the Derwent Valley for the first time there was large-scale industrial production in a hitherto rural landscape. The need to provide housing and other facilities for workers and managers resulted in the creation of the first modern industrial towns. The fact that the further development of urban-based cotton mill technology happened in Lancashire rather than Derbyshire meant that early mills in the Derwent Valley were not re-developed.



BELPER RIVER WEIRS, RETAINING WALLS AND SLUICES c.1793: GRADE II* LISTED

First Listed 1966.

All the sluices, the floodgate, and both weirs, East and West of the river bridge (and the retaining walls between them) are included in the listing. Two water channels cross the site passing below the North-East and South-East corners of the East Mill. Two sets of sluice gates which control the flow of water.

The horseshoe weir (or Circular weir as known then) was constructed at the same time as the West Mill, to ensure there was sufficient head to power all the waterwheels on site – there were eleven in all.

The sluices and weir starred in Ken Russell's tragic drowning scene in the 1969 film 'Women in Love'.

NORTH MILL 1804: GRADE I LISTED INCORPORATING BELPER MUSEUM & VISITORS CENTRE

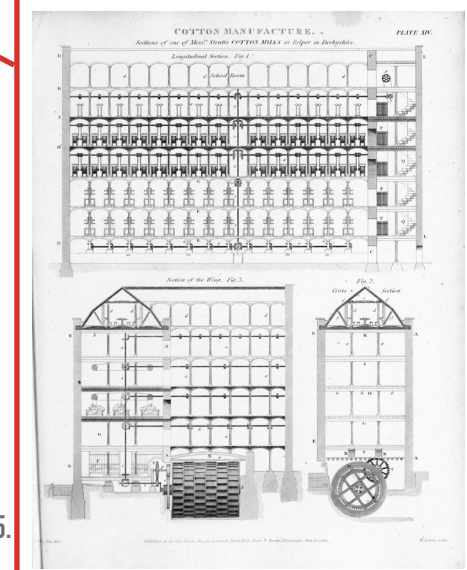
Rebuilt on an earlier mill destroyed by fire. It was seminal in the evolution of fire-proof design using iron and brick structure with clay pot infill and plaster finish. It is one of the oldest surviving examples of an industrial iron-framed 'fire-proof' building and is recognised as one of the most important industrial buildings in the world. North Mill is on the Historic England's Buildings at Risk Register: Priority C - 'Slow decay: no solution agreed'.

"Apart from Bage's mill at Shrewsbury (which has an altered exterior) the north mill is the earliest example of a completely iron framed mill in the world and is certainly the most intact extant example of this type of construction".

The ground and first floor are currently leased to the Belper North Mill Trust (see overleaf). They opened their Belper North Mill Museum and Visitor Centre in 1996. The upper floors are rented out by First Investments as managed office space. A restaurant occupies the adjacent workshop building. The 1965 canteen on the waterside is now empty again, after the soft-play facility closed recently.

CHIMNEY 1854-1990: GRADE II LISTED

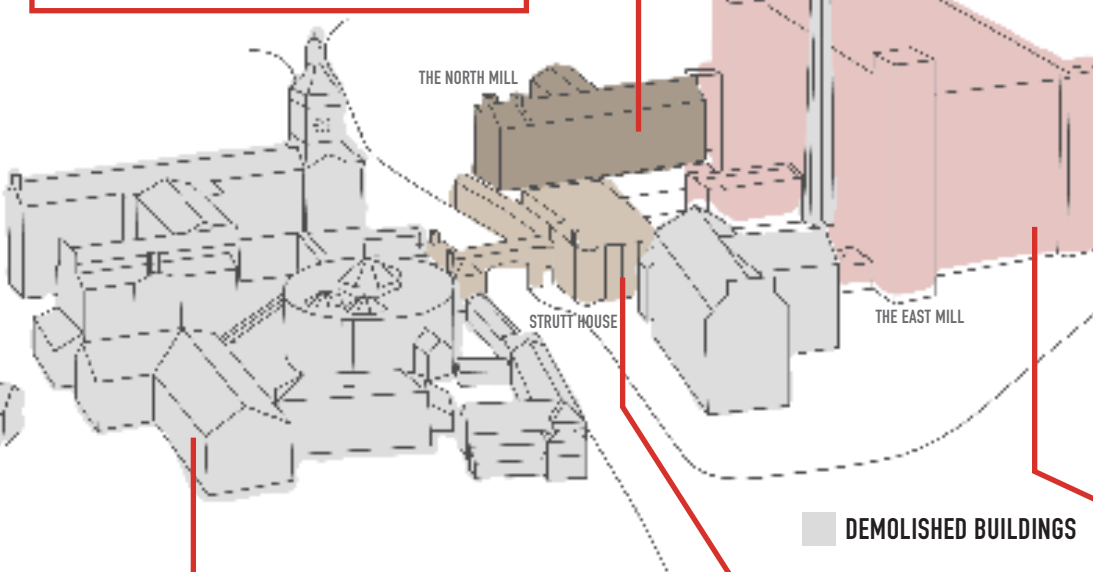
At the time, the highest chimney in the country, it was constructed to provide the option of steam power when water levels were too high or too low. The chimney predates the East Mill by half a century. In 1990 reports of the chimney 'swaying wildly' in high winds caused the nearby school to be evacuated. The eventual demolition took longer than it did to build. Foundations and substantial base survive.



VIEW OF NORTH MILL FROM WEST SIDE



MODERN DAY AERIAL VIEW OF MILLS AND WIER



EAST MILL 1912: GRADE II LISTED

Listed in 1979. Constructed by the ESCCo, this imposing 7-storey building has a structural steel frame with Accrington brick cladding. Built without scaffolding in the style of the Lancashire mills which post-dated the Derwent Valley innovations. Operations ceased 1986 bringing to an end 210 years of cotton thread production on the site. It is now completely unoccupied and unheated and the 'north light' glazed roof construction is allowing water to penetrate through the building.



CURRENT STATE OF EAST MILL

WEST MILL COMPLEX

Majority completed by 1796 and demolished in total by 1962.

JUBILEE CLOCK TOWER - completed 1898 commemorated Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

ROUND MILL completed - 1813

Unique circular shape for an industrial building – used Jeremy Bentham's 18th century Pantopticon prison model needing only one central overseer to supervise production. Demolition with accompanying fatalities is within living memory (December 1959).

WEST MILL MODERN DAY

In 1966 the ESCCo built a new factory on the present site for the production of new synthetic fibre textiles. This closed in 1986 (with the East Mill closure). Aristoc acquired the site for hosiery manufacture in 1991. Aristoc was later absorbed by Courtaulds and eventually closed in 2016. It remains unoccupied.

STRUTT HOUSE 1912: GRADE II LISTED

Listed in 1960.

Built at the same time as the East Mill. Strutt House was previously known just as 'offices' and was the administrative hub of the working mill complex. Details of note include the initials of the ESCCo carved above the entrance and stone cladding which denoted it's non-manufacturing use. Currently rented out as office space.

ARCHED FOOTBRIDGE c.1795: GRADE II* LISTED

Listed in 1960.

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 in 1810, so that the mills could be defended by soldiers in case of an attack by mill-wreckers.

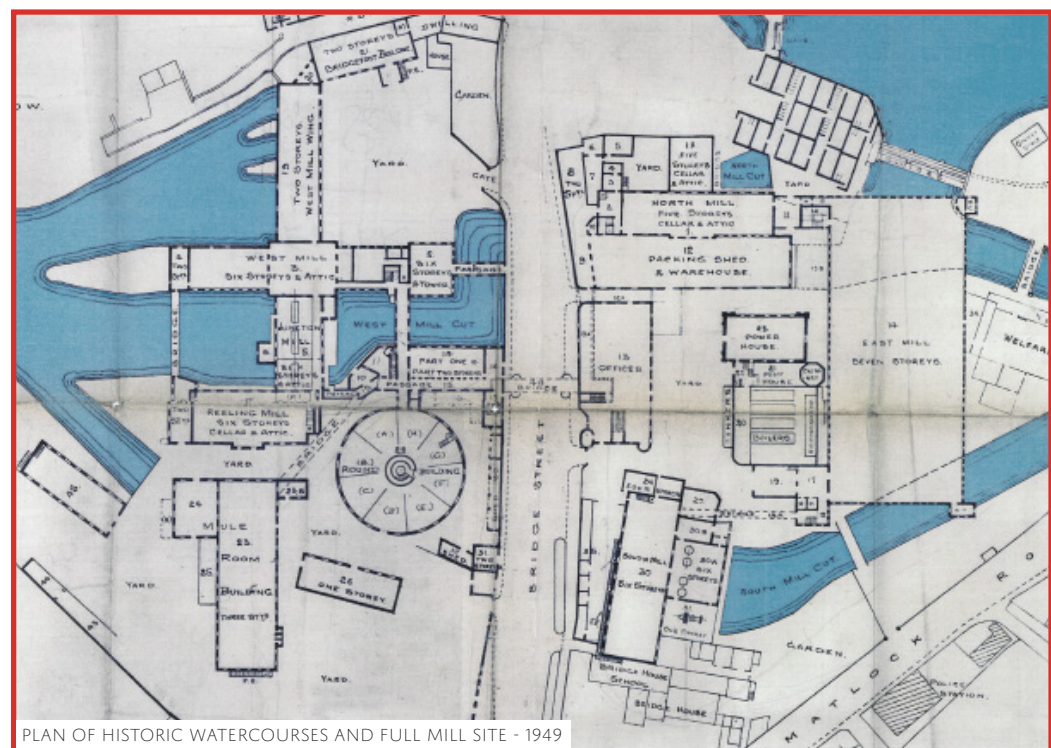
TURBINE - CURRENT OPERATION

Listed 1990.

Derwent Hydroelectric Power Ltd generate clean electricity using the turbines in the remnants of the largely demolished South Mill. They operate a 350kw scheme fed by the South Mill cut (watercourse) in the same position as the turbines shown on the historic watercourses plan left. The turbine is rated at 350kw which is enough to power 400+ average homes.

SOUTH MILL c.1776: GRADE II LISTED FIREPROOF VERSION REBUILT IN THE EARLY 1800s

Demolished in 1962. The single storey turbine house that was part of the South Mill still remains and is included in the listing. Predated surviving North Mill. The original South Mill was Jedidiah Strutt's first mill in Belper, completed in 1776.



PLAN OF HISTORIC WATERCOURSES AND FULL MILL SITE - 1949

