

Derbyshire Archaeological Society
INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY SECTION
*Some industrial and transport features of interest
beside the River Derwent between Derby
and Darley Abbey*

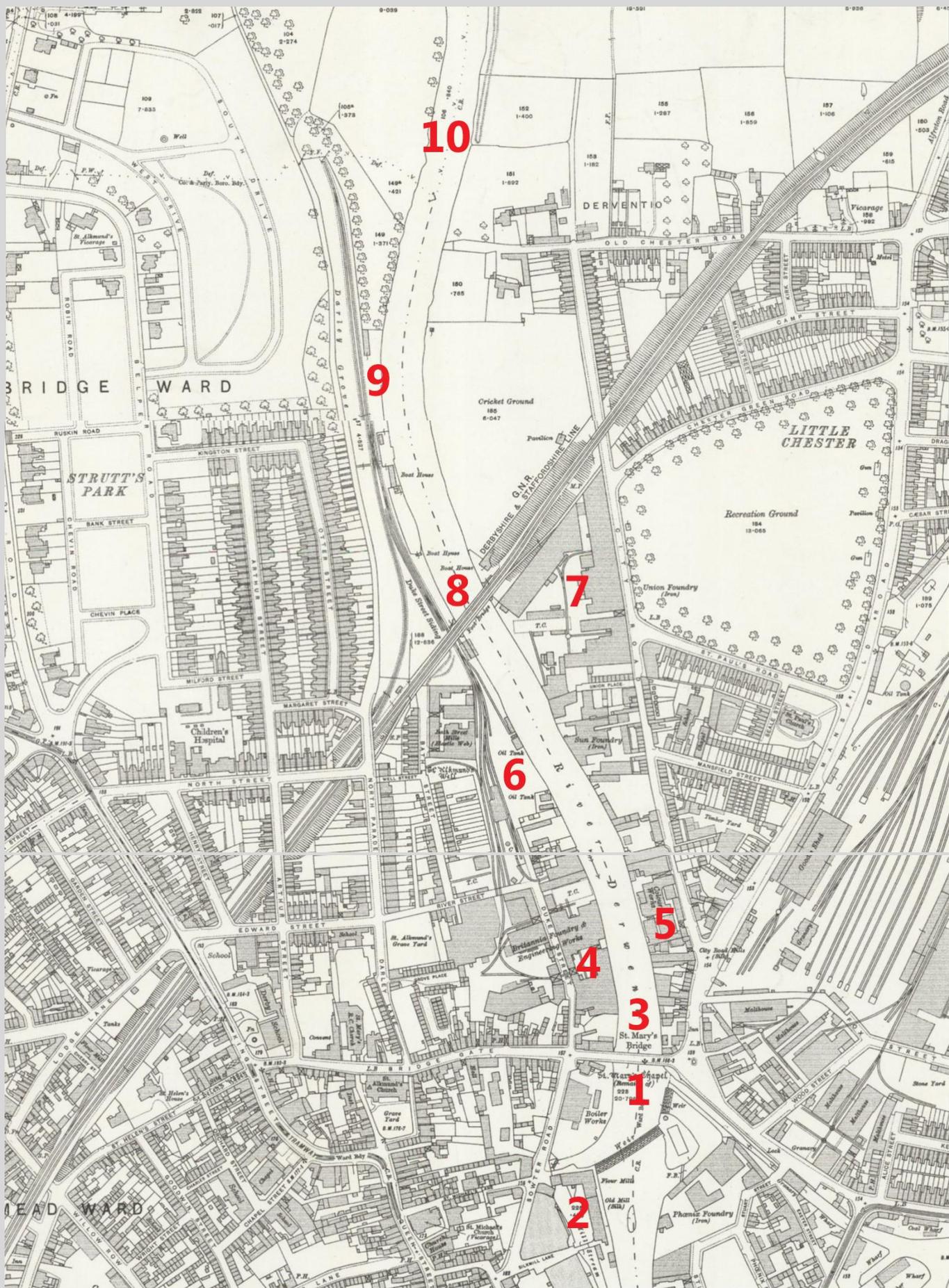
The Handyside Bridge

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About This Guide

- This short guide outlines various historical features of industrial or transport interest along the banks of the River Derwent between Derby and Darley Abbey.
- Each site is numbered with the numbers repeated in red on the map sections to show the actual location.
- The maps show the banks of the Derwent as they existed in 1913, so the situation is quite different today with almost no industry and changed transport links.
- The descriptions for each site are necessarily brief but weblinks or book references are provided if more detailed information is required.
- It should be noted that at some of the sites there is nothing left to see (in which cases illustrations are included here), while at others flood protection works together with waterside vegetation hide features from view, particularly from the river itself. However, the guide can also be used as part of a self-conducted circular walk (see page 11).
- On river trips the boat turns round short of Darley Abbey Mills so the features numbered 14-18 may only be seen distantly or not at all. They are included for completeness and because they feature in the walk.





1 Causey Bridge:

Boat trips to Darley Abbey start here. The bridge was built as part of Stage II of Derby's Inner Ring Road and opened in 1972. It was designed to be as low as possible so as not to overwhelm the medieval St Mary's Bridge Chapel but still leave the 18th century St Mary's Bridge (see 3) visible from downstream. The name Causey is an older form of *causeway* and references the fact that this was probably the earliest crossing point of the river in Derby. The crossing was effectively a ford in the form of a stone paved causeway connecting St Michael's Lane with Nottingham Road. It most likely ran across the top of the now removed weir that would later power The Silk Mill (see 2).

More info: www.sabre-roads.org.uk/wiki/index.php?title=Causey_Bridge

2 The Silk Mill:

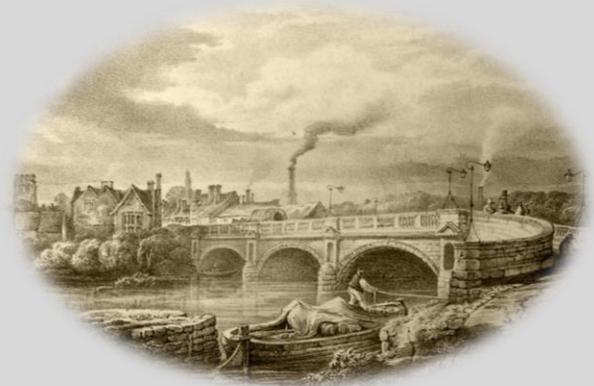
Derby's most iconic industrial building, now the Museum of Making and the southern gateway to the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. This water-powered location has a complex history but is a very ancient one with St Michael's corn mills (represented by the northern end of the building) dating back to at least the 11th century and possibly before. The southern end – the Silk Mill proper – was commenced in 1721 and used technology 'acquired' from Italy by John Lombe. With 5 storeys, mass production machinery operated from a common power source, and a large labour force it resembled a modern factory which led to it being regarded as one of the wonders of its age. Most of what you see today, following successive reconstructions, dates from 1911 but the stone arched foundations are original to 1721. Silk production ceased in the 1860s.

More info: www.derwentvalleymills.org/discover/derwent-valley-mills-history/derwent-valley-mills-key-sites/key-sites-the-silk-mill/

3 St Mary's Bridge:

The present 3-arch bridge dates from 1788-93 and is listed Grade II*. It replaced a narrow 7-arch medieval bridge of which traces remain, notably in the foundations of St Mary's Bridge Chapel on the west bank and pier foundations in the riverbed. The Chapel is one of only six such chapels to survive in England and may date back to the late 1200s. It is Grade I listed. Opposite on the east bank a grassed area was one of three points where the Derby Canal entered the river. It was opened in 1796, closed in 1945 and abandoned in 1964.

More info: her.derbyshire.gov.uk/Monument/MDR4545



ST MARY'S BRIDGE WITH THE DERBY CANAL IN THE FOREGROUND, 1830

4 Britannia Foundry (site of):

The Britannia Foundry & Engineering Works of Andrew Handyside & Co was once one of Derby's largest and most renowned firms, producing steam engines, structural ironwork, and bridges. Handyside took over the Britannia Foundry in 1847 and the business remained successful for the next 60 years. In the 20th century it fell on hard times and the works was closed in 1933, having traded latterly as Derby Castings Ltd. It was soon after demolished and housing built on the site. Today the only reminders are Handyside Street and the *Furnace Inn*.

More info:

www.gracesguide.co.uk/Andrew_Handyside_and_Co



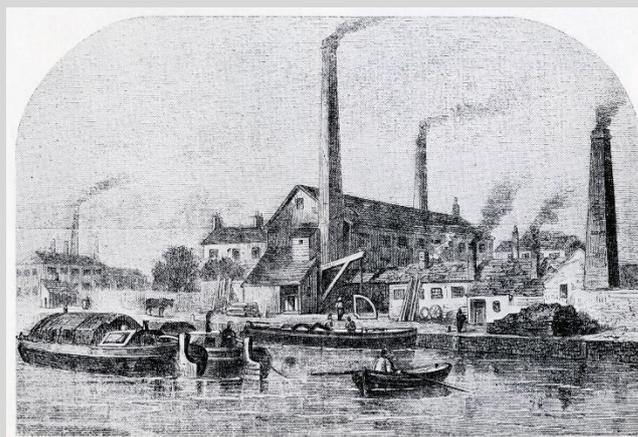
THE BRITANNIA FOUNDRY & ENGINEERING WORKS, 1881

Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

5 Fox's Engineering Works (site of):

Another important Derby firm but far less well known than Handyside's and which disappeared much earlier. James Fox was a pioneering designer and maker of machine tools whose works had become established on a site between City Road and the river by 1792. Trading as Fox Brothers, it was responsible for rapid advances in engineering production technology and continued until wound up in 1870. Fox Street, opposite the site of the works, recalls the firm's presence but nothing else remains.

More info: www.gracesguide.co.uk/Fox_of_Derby



FOX'S ENGINEERING WORKS
(with plenty of activity on the river)

6 Great Northern Railway Duke Street Goods Yard (site of):

A narrow unrecognisable area of landscaped grassland was once the Great Northern Railway's Duke Street goods yard, which existed from 1878 until 1952. The GNR's Derbyshire Extension from Nottingham to Burton upon Trent via Ilkeston and Derby was intended to compete with the rival Midland Railway and represented an audacious invasion of both its territory and the town in which it had its headquarters. Duke Street yard was a subsidiary of its main depot at Derby Friargate station and served a range of riverside industries such as Andrew Handyside & Co. Traffic was also exchanged between rail and water via a transshipment shed.

More info: see Mark Higginson, *The Friargate Line: Derby and the Great Northern Railway, 1989 (out of print)*

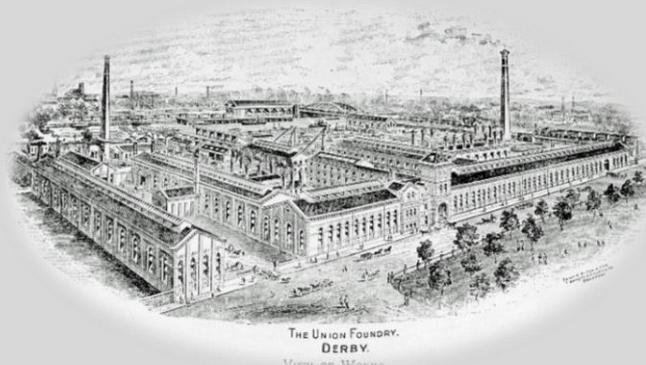


DUKE STREET GOOD YARD ABOUT 1948

7 Union Foundry:

A further significant Derby industrial site, the Union Foundry was where Sir Alfred Seale Haslam pioneered the commercial development of refrigeration machinery from 1868. This culminated in 1881 with the arrival on the Thames of the first cargo of frozen meat from Australia, an event that would revolutionise the transport of perishable foodstuffs. While all the buildings nearest the river have been removed, the imposing frontage can be viewed from Chester Green.

More info: www.gracesguide.co.uk/Haslam_Foundry_and_Engineering_Co



THE UNION FOUNDRY OF THE HASLAM FOUNDRY & ENGINEERING COMPANY
(with the Handyside Bridge (8) and Duke Street Goods Yard (6) visible in the background)

8 Handyside Bridge:

This bowstring girder structure carried the Great Northern Railway's Derbyshire Extension across the river from 1878 until closure in 1968. Although now known as Handyside Bridge, officially it was simply Bridge No 100. Originally it included, after local pressure, a cantilevered footway on the south side connecting Little Chester with North Parade but this was removed in 1978 when the main (by then disused) 132ft span was converted for pedestrian use. Handyside's supplied many of the bridges on this line (including the ornamented one over Friar Gate), but not from its Britannia Foundry as is often supposed. It had a separate more spacious Bridge Yard on a site now occupied by Prime Parkway on the opposite side of the river. The bridge is listed Grade II. See cover picture.

More info: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handyside_Bridge

9 Great Northern Railway Duke Street Branch (site of):

To reach Duke Street Goods Yard required a branch line that dropped down to the riverside from the main line north of the Handyside Bridge. Between the river and Darley Grove there was a long siding or headshunt extending for 200 metres (219 yards) which allowed trains to reverse into the yard passing through a narrow bridge under the main line in the process. The latter remains but not much else, the track here being removed about 1955, although the northern extremity in the form of a low embankment is just about detectable. The Derby and Derwent Rowing Clubs' premises partly occupy the trackbed.

More info: Mark Higginson, *The Friargate Line: Derby and the Great Northern Railway*, 1989 (out of print)

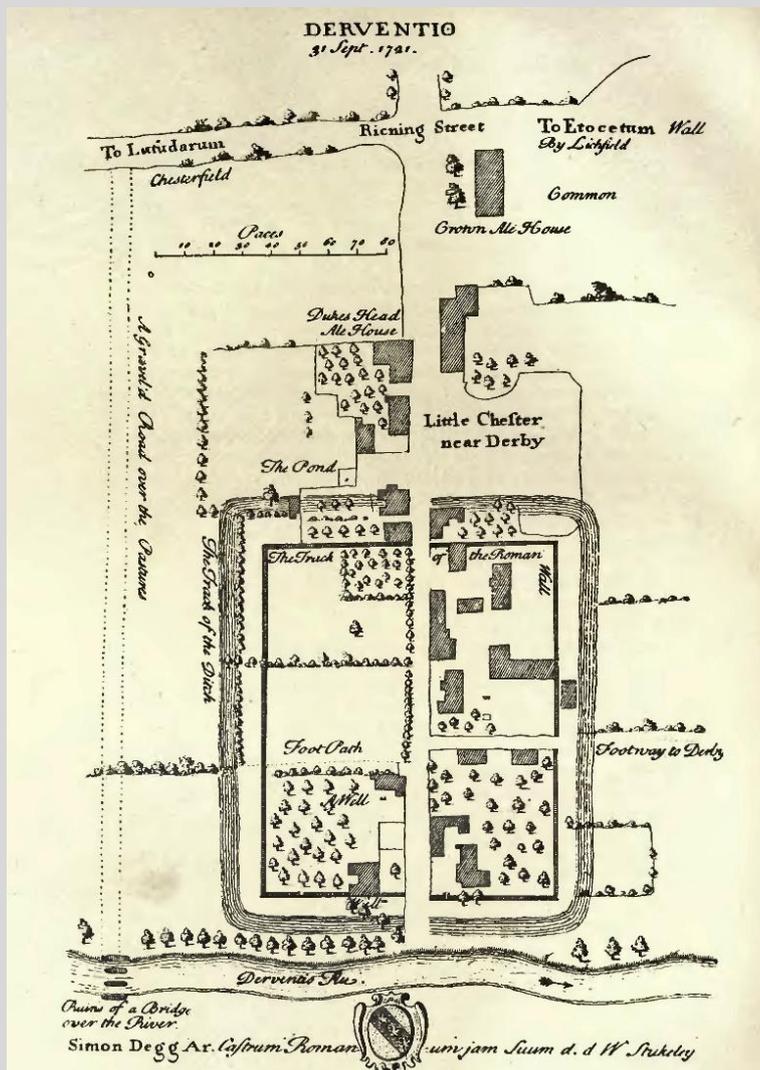
10 Roman Bridge (site of):

A much earlier piece of transport infrastructure. At this point, the Roman road from the military forts at Strutt's Park to Broxtowe near Nottingham bridged the Derwent. It is theorised that this may have pre-dated the establishment of the Roman settlement at Little Chester (Derwentio) and that later in the Roman period it was replaced by another bridge further south of which no trace has been found. A plan by the antiquarian William Stukeley in 1721 identified two surviving stone piers in the river, which are thought to have supported a timber superstructure. Although since toppled, in the 1960s investigations revealed the pier bases and a debris field in the river at the same spot as shown on Stukeley's plan.

More info:

her.derbyshire.gov.uk/Monument/MDR4560

RIGHT: WILLIAM STUKELEY'S 1721 PLAN OF LITTLE CHESTER WITH THE REMAINS OF THE ROMAN BRIDGE SHOWN AT BOTTOM LEFT.



11 Northern Flood Relief Culvert:

Historically, the main cause of flooding in Derby was the Markeaton Brook, a tributary of the Derwent, largely confined to a culvert under the city's streets. After major incidents in the early 1930s, a 2.2km (1.4 miles) tunnel was constructed from Markeaton Park to Darley Abbey to take excess water coming down the brook away from the constricted town centre section. This is where it exits into the river, marked by a balustraded stone parapet. It was completed in 1938.

More info:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Markeaton_Brook



THE NORTHERN RELIEF CULVERT

12 Darley Abbey Paper Mill Channel:

Almost hidden in the trees but just above the Flood Relief Culvert a small channel joins the river. This is artificial and was once part of the water system serving the Darley Abbey Paper Mill, demolished in 1930 (see 15). The mill featured a short headrace off the south end of the main weir at Darley Abbey, sluices then admitting the water to the waterwheels within the building, before exiting back into the river below the weir via an equally short tailrace. The channel seen here was much longer and extended for 0.4km (0.25 miles), its purpose being to take surplus water away from the mill and return it to the river well to the south of the tailrace.

More info: her.derbyshire.gov.uk/Monument/MDR9747

13 Folly House:

A row of what was originally three houses (now a single dwelling) with an unclear history. One suggestion is that the building started life as a water-powered mill in the late 17th century but was not successful. This may be apocryphal but it is known to have been purchased in 1778 by Thomas Evans, proprietor of the Darley Abbey cotton mills just upstream. In 1938 the house furthest from the river was demolished but in recent times has been sympathetically replicated by a modern extension on the original footprint.

Remarkably and perhaps solely because of its unusual name, it was chosen to feature on a 1930s advertising poster for Shell, the artist being Rowland Suddaby.

The stream that joins the river to one side of Folly House is a much realigned watercourse that has its origins near Morley and then passes through Breadsall successively as the Ferriby and Dam Brooks.

More info:

her.derbyshire.gov.uk/Monument/MDR11675



ROWLAND SUDDABY'S 1937 POSTER SHOWING FOLLY HOUSE(S).

14 Boar's Head Cotton Mills:

Darley Abbey Mills are the most complete of the surviving groups of cotton spinning mills within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. They were constructed by Thomas Evans between 1782 and 1830 and comprise 5 main mills plus warehouses, offices, stables, bobbin shops, etc. Known later as the Boar's Head Mills, this was derived from the Evans family crest, granted in 1815. The Evans family's involvement continued until 1903 when they were sold. Textile production finally ceased in 1970 and today the buildings are occupied by a variety of businesses.

More info: <https://darleyabbeymills.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Darley-Abbey-History-Board.pdf>

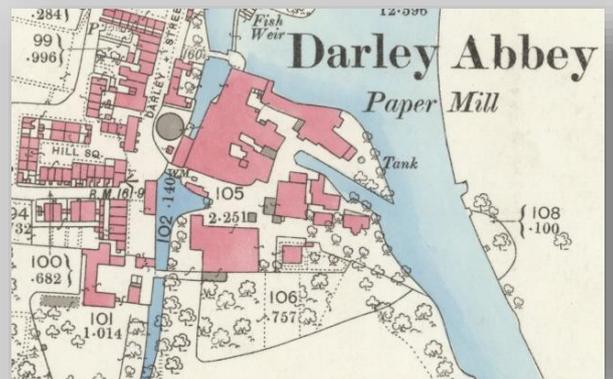


THE BOAR'S HEAD OR DARLEY ABBEY COTTON MILLS

15 Darley Abbey Paper Mill (site of):

The story of Darley Abbey's mills is not all about cotton. Its industrial roots go back to the monastic period and there were then and later mills for corn, flint, fulling, hemp, leather, and paper, all on the west bank of the river. Of these the paper mill was both the largest and the longest lived and was in operation by 1713, though the latter-day mill dated from 1793 after a fire (the scourge of all mills) had destroyed the earlier one. By that date it was part of the Evans family's business empire. This mill was demolished in 1930 and the site is now an area of grassland flanked by the surviving former Manager's House at its south-east corner.

More info: her.derbyshire.gov.uk/Monument/MDR9747



DARLEY ABBEY PAPER MILL, 1881

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16 Darley Abbey Weir:

The weir was the all-important power source for the industrial operations at Darley Abbey, providing a head of water to drive the waterwheels that in turn drove the mill machinery. The present weir, running diagonally across the river, dates from about 1782 and is in two parts separated by an island. Sluices controlled the flow of water and above the weir leats fed the cotton and the paper mills. The bridge spanning the river here was originally masonry, later replaced by one of cast iron which was rebuilt using concrete in the 1930s and supplemented due to weakness by a temporary structure in 2022.

More info: historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1420572?section=official-list-entry



WATER POWER – THE WEIR AT DARLEY ABBEY

17 Darley Abbey Millworkers' Housing:

For many years, Darley Abbey was an industrial village built and owned by the Evans family for its workers. The housing they provided, alongside that built by the Strutts at Belper and Milford, and Richard Arkwright at Cromford, was to a much higher standard than contemporary vernacular dwellings and as early as 1787 the Evans' were offering workers 'comfortable houses with every convenience'. Most of this still exists with good examples in Mill Yard, Darley Street, Poplar Row, New Road, West Row, Brick Row, Mile Ash Lane, and Lavender Row.

For a video outlining the history of Darley Abbey (length 9 minutes) see:

www.darleyabbey.com/about/from-monks-to-mills/



THE SQUARE (OR FLAT SQUARE) OFF DARLEY STREET – MILL HOUSING AT DARLEY ABBEY

18 Darley Abbey House (site of):

The Evans family owned two large houses in Darley Abbey – *Darley House* and *Darley Abbey* (or *Hall*). The former was built for them in 1782 and they retained ownership until 1931 after which it was demolished with Weirfield Road today occupying its site. However, in 1835 the family acquired the Abbey and this became their main house. It had been first erected in 1727, on or close to the site of the monastic abbey and then remodelled in 1777. The Abbey was fronted by an extensive area of landscaped parkland running southwards along the Derwent towards Derby that today forms the principal part of Darley Park. The house itself no longer stands, having been demolished in 1962 after a period in use as a school. Its site, on the wooded hillside above the river is marked by a terrace and a tearoom in the only remaining fragment of the building.

More info:

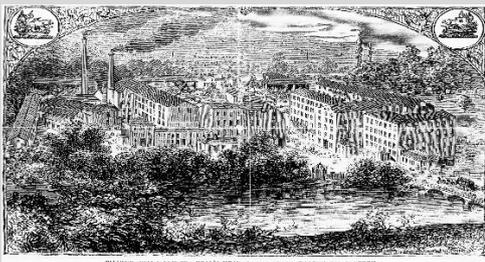
www.mbuss.com/central/dcsb/DocLib/5history/pages/darley_hall_history.htm



DARLEY ABBEY HOUSE ABOUT 1894



A view of The Silk Mill about 1850. Causey Bridge now occupies the foreground with the nearest river channel infilled.



A 19th century engraving showing the extent of Walter Evans & Co's Boar's Head Cotton Mills at Darley Abbey.

The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site

The World Heritage Site, which was inscribed by UNESCO in 2001, occupies a 15-mile stretch of the Derwent Valley between Derby and Matlock Bath and includes Darley Abbey, Milford, Belper, and Cromford. The reason for this international recognition is that the valley saw the birth of the factory system, when new types of building were erected to house new technology for spinning cotton, while the need to provide housing and other facilities resulted in the creation of the first modern industrial settlements.

Using this guide for a walk

This guide can also be used as the basis for a circular walk from Derby to Darley Abbey and back. The route takes in all the sites listed and is along paved surfaces. The distance is around 3½ miles or 6 kilometres.

A suggested route is:

- a. Start at Derby's Museum of Making **(2)** and follow the riverside path upstream on the left-hand or west bank beneath Causey **(1)** and St Mary's **(3)** Bridges.
- b. Continue beside the river noting the sites of the Britannia Foundry **(4)**, Fox's Engineering Works **(5)**, and Duke Street Goods Yard **(6)** to reach the Handyside Bridge **(8)**.
- c. Cross the bridge and detour to view the front of the Union Foundry on Chester Green **(7)** before returning to the river and following the east bank upstream (rather than the tree-lined road) watching out for the site of the Roman bridge **(10)** and then on the far bank the balustraded flood relief culvert **(11)** and the paper mill channel **(12)**.
- d. Arriving at Folly House **(13)** walk up Folly Road and turn left on reaching Haslam's Lane. This takes you through the Boar's Head Cotton Mills complex **(14)** and then across the river above the weir **(16)** and into Darley Abbey village **(17)**.
- e. Next turn down Darley Street and bear left at The Paper Mill Pub, noting the site of the paper mill itself **(15)** to your left.
- f. Beyond the car park there is a choice of paths either beside the river or straight across Darley Park; alternatively a detour can be made up the hill to the site of Darley Abbey house **(18)** where there is a tearoom and toilets.
- g. Continuing back towards Derby, look out again for the paper mill channel **(12)**, the flood relief culvert **(11)**, and the site of the Roman bridge **(10)**. Over to your right among the trees is the northern end of the Duke Street branch line **(9)** running on a low embankment.
- h. Following this past the rowing clubs will bring you back to the Handyside Bridge **(8)** where you pass through the subsidiary span that gave access to Duke Street goods yard **(6)**.
- i. From here you can follow your outward route back to the Museum of Making.



Museum of Making, Derby

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River Derwent below Darley Abbey Mills