

# DARLEY ABBEY The Evans' Legacy – The Mills

Welcome to Darley Abbey, part of the **Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site**. This board is one of a series which describe features of interest in this internationally important landscape.

The World Heritage Site occupies a 15-mile stretch of the Derwent Valley between Matlock Bath and Derby. The maps on the far right of the board will help you to get your bearings.

There are many other places to visit along the Valley, either within the site or further afield. The rich heritage of the entire Derwent Valley is recognised through its promotion as the National Heritage Corridor™.

Your nearest visitor information point is The Silk Mill, Derby's Museum of Industry and History.

## THE HISTORY OF THE MILLS

The industrial roots of Darley Abbey date back to the monastic period. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries a series of water powered mills – for corn, flint, leather and paper – were developed on land between Darley Street and the west bank of the river Derwent, to the right of where you are standing.

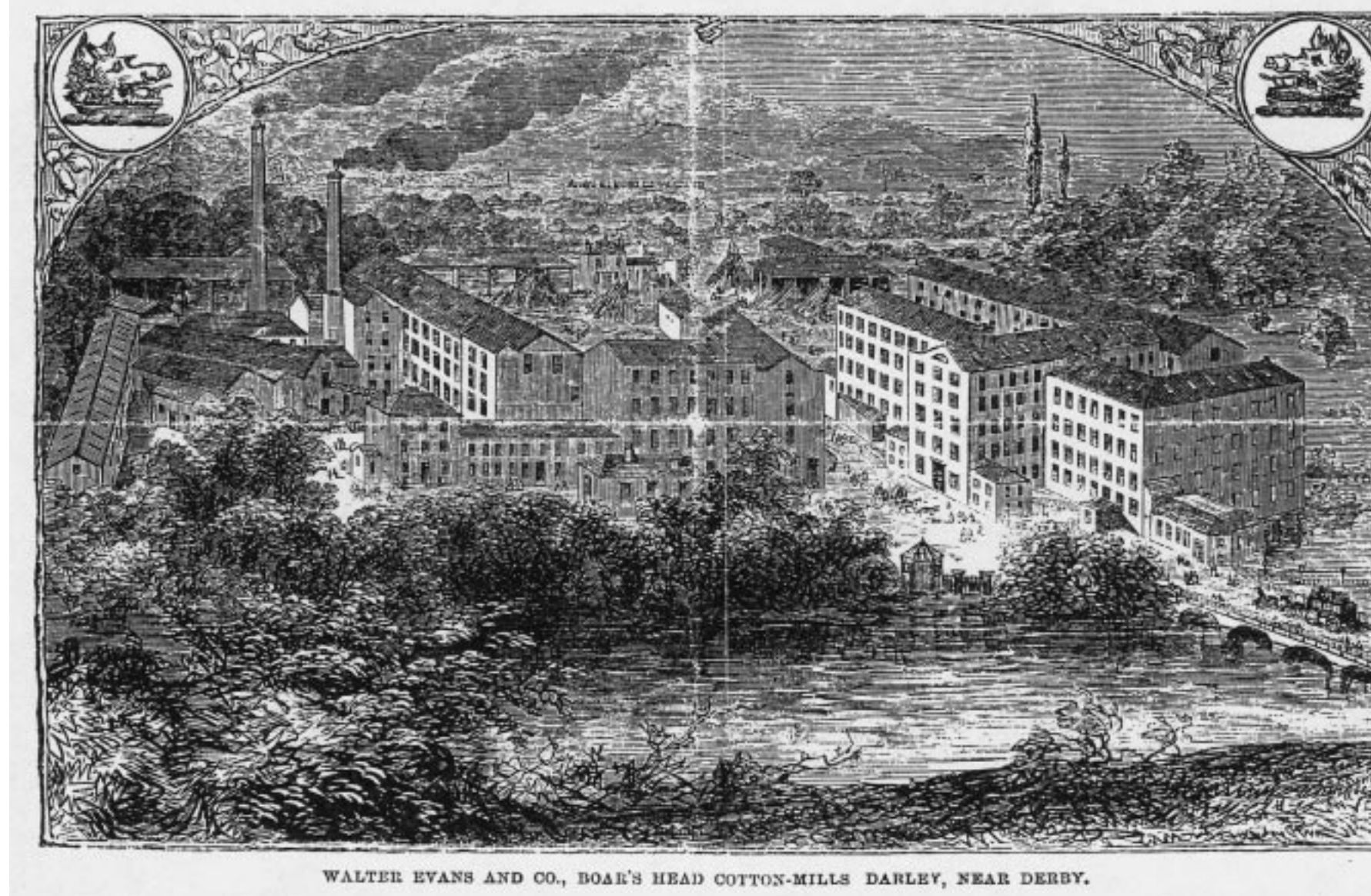
The land on the opposite bank was acquired by Thomas Evans for his cotton mills in 1778. Here, from 1782 onwards, he applied his skills to cotton spinning and to the development of a factory community.

These mills later became known as the 'Boar's Head Mills' and were constructed between 1782 and 1830. They constitute the most complete of the surviving cotton mill complexes in the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site and are of immense historical and architectural importance. The site contains five main mills and a comprehensive range of ancillary structures, including warehouses, offices, stables, bobbin shops and domestic buildings.

The Boar's Head Mills specialised in quality thread for sewing, embroidery and haberdashery.

The mills were originally water-powered. The weirs in front of you (see photo e, right), created the head of water which powered the wheels that drove the machinery in the mill buildings. The culverts that channelled the water to and from the wheels have been filled in. The chimney marks the later arrival of steam power, used to supplement the water power.

The Evans' involvement in the cotton mills ceased with the death of Walter Evans II in 1903. In 1905, John Peacock, hitherto manager, bought the mills from the estate. The Peacock family ran the business until 1943 when it was sold to J & P Coats of the Coats Viyella Group. Textile use ceased in 1970. In 1969 the sale of the mills for other uses began. Today, Darley Abbey Mills is home to a variety of engineering and light industrial businesses.



**a** View of the Boar's Head Mills as seen from Darley House, 1862. (Illustrated Times). – See photo b below.



**b** The brand name 'Boar's Head Mills' derives from the Evans family crest, which was granted in 1815. (Photograph courtesy of The Arkwright Society).



**c** Bobbin featuring the Boar's Head (Photograph courtesy of The Arkwright Society).



**d** View taken in the early twentieth century of St. Matthew's Church, Darley House (demolished 1932) and Darley Abbey Mills.



**e** Aerial view of Darley Abbey Mills in 1959. Note Steam Engine Chimney (still standing today).



**f** The weir across the River Derwent in 1955 showing the sluice gate control wheels. These were destroyed by flooding about 10 years later.



**g** Doubling-frame which converted yarn into sewing cotton. (Illustrated Times, 1862).



**h** Final winding, preparation and packaging of finished product.

## DERWENT VALLEY MILLS World Heritage Site

This map shows the full extent of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site – from Matlock Bath in the north to Derby in the south

