

Darley Abbey Circular Walk 6

Start and finish: Free car park off Old Chester Road, next to the tennis courts. Toilets available.

Grid reference of start and finish:
SK35312 37551

Distance: 3½ kilometres, 2¼ miles.

Time: Allow 1¼ hours.

Terrain: Park paths and minor roads within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, inscribed by UNESCO in 2001. On the most difficult parts of the route in dry weather you will encounter uneven surfaces and a fairly steep slope. There will be easier sections.

Nearby bus routes: 9.1, 9.2, 59, 71, 92 (Sunday), Amberline, H1 stopping at Coach and Horses pub on Mansfield Road. Ring traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit www.traveline.org.uk for details of these services.

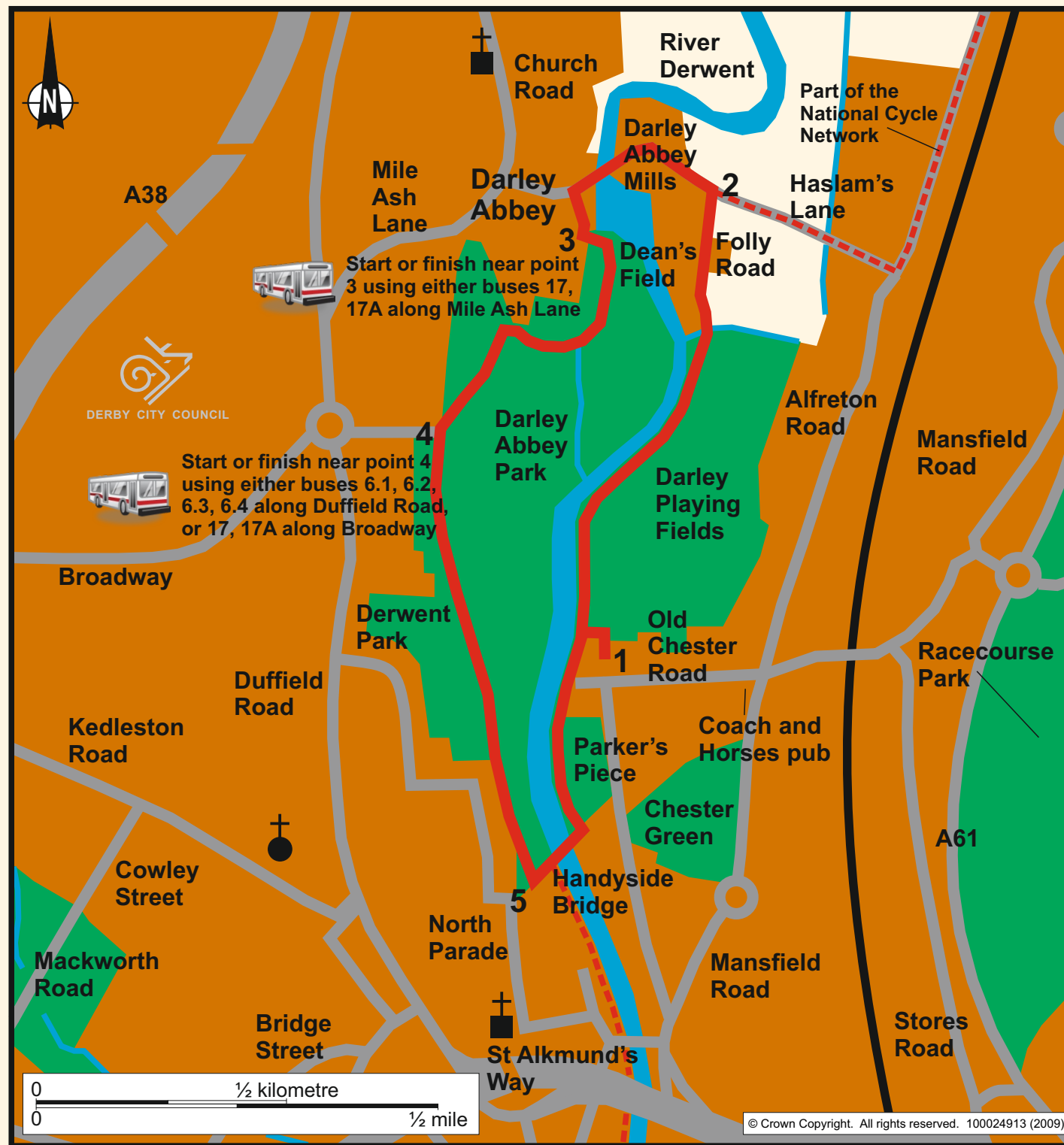
Parking: Free car park off Old Chester Road, next to the tennis courts.

The walk

1 From the car park follow the path between the tennis courts and the Chester Green Community Centre. After the community centre turn left and follow the path down to the river. Then turn right along the riverside path.

The riverbank through Darley Playing Fields is lined with Alder and Sycamore trees.

Plants which you may see during summer include Hemlock, which is very poisonous and Great Hairy Willow Herb with its rosy coloured flowers. Himalayan Balsam, known also as Policeman's Helmet, an introduced species, may also be seen. It has pink hooded flowers and explosive seed pods.



Further along the riverbank, you may see a lot of Ramsons, known also as Wild Garlic. It has attractive white flowers and a strong 'onion' smell. Pink flowered Red Campion may also be seen.

Continue along the path and cross the bridge.

As you cross the bridge, the house on your left is Folly House. Late 17th century, it was built as a water mill, but the establishment of the Boar's Head Cotton Mill upstream starved it of water, hence the name 'Folly'.

Continue on along Folly Road. Along the verge on your right, you may see the white flowered Garlic Mustard known also as Jack-by-the-Hedge.

2 At the end of Folly Road, turn left on to Haslam's Lane and into the Boar's Head Cotton Mill, known today as Darley Abbey Mills.

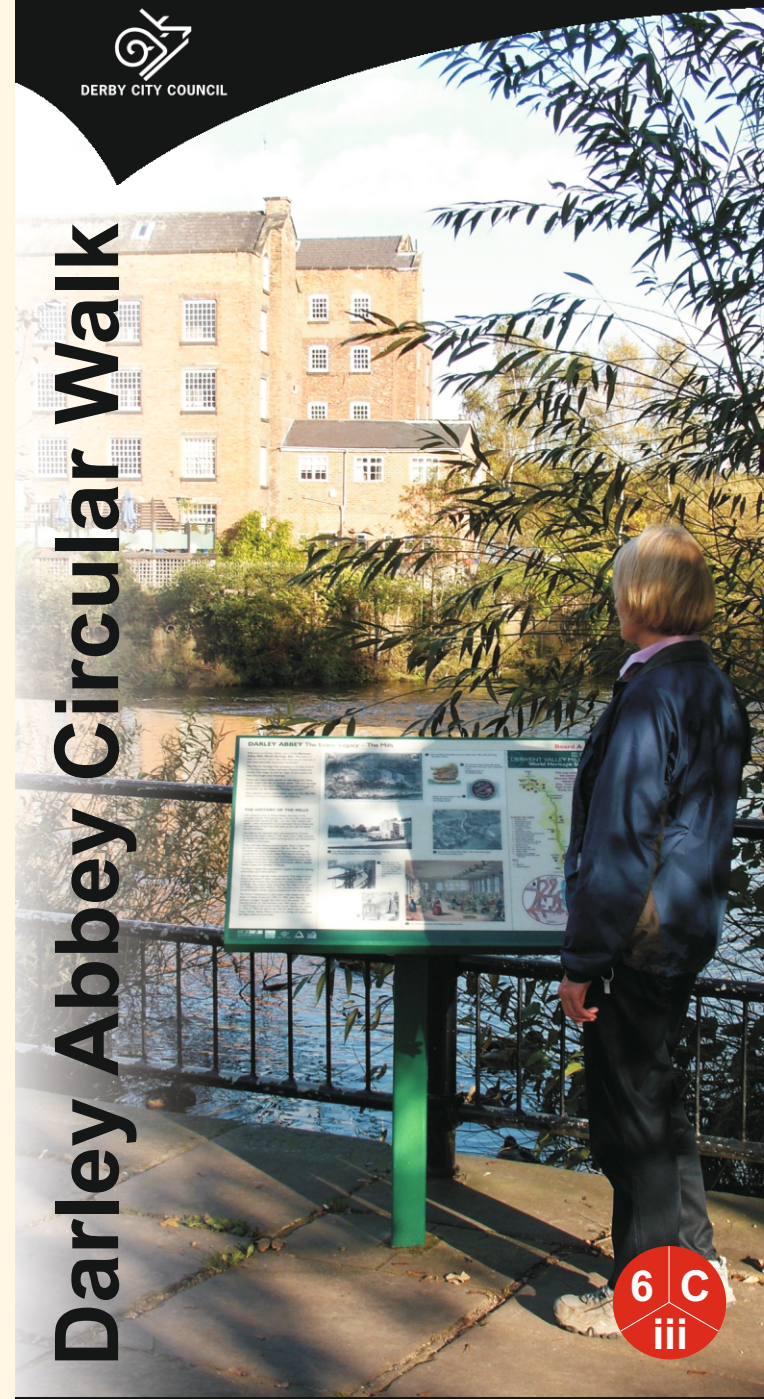
Please note that the mill complex and bridge are privately owned and visitors should take great care when walking through the mills - vehicles regularly use the roads between buildings and as an access road through the mills. Visitors are advised that there is no access to the mill buildings except on authorised business.

The Boar's Head Cotton Mill, founded by Walter Evans, began production in 1783. It ceased production in the early 1960s.

Walk over the Toll Bridge, paying the toll if asked. Continue along Old Lane and then left into Darley Street.

The village of Darley Abbey has a long history. Around the year 1140 the Augustinian Abbey was founded.

Darley Abbey Circular Walk



It was the largest monastic establishment in Derbyshire. Fragments of the Abbey are built into houses in Abbey Lane. The only substantial surviving part of the Abbey, on Darley Street, was sensitively restored and converted into the Abbey Inn in 1980. Most of the village was built between 1785 and 1830 by the Evans family to house the workers in the Cotton Mill.

3 At the Abbey Inn, bear left into the public car park. On your left is Dean's Field. Carry straight on into Darley Abbey Park. Where the path forks, turn right. Walk up the hill until you reach the main pathway, opposite the terraced garden. You will find a tea room and toilets here.

Darley Abbey Park was the private park to Darley Hall. The Hall was built for William Woolley in 1727, reputedly by Smith of Warwick, and extended by Joseph Pickford in the 1760s. In 1929, the Hall was left in the will of Mrs Ada Evans to the Derby Corporation. Demolished in 1962, it was located where the terraced garden now is.

4 Turn left and walk up the hill to the Lodge and then left along Darley Grove.

From Darley Grove you get good views over the river valley towards Chaddesden and Spondon. In early summer, you may see some Wood Avens along the wall, with its yellow buttercup-like flowers.

At the bottom of the hill is a 'grove' of mature Beech trees. Their three-angled seed cups, known as 'masts', are released in autumn.

Continue along Darley Grove until you see the former railway bridge on your left.

5 The bridge was built in 1877 by Andrew Handyside at his Britannia Foundry near here on Duke Street.

The Great Northern Railway branch line, which this bridge carried, closed to rail traffic in 1968.

After crossing the bridge, turn left and follow the riverside path through Parker's Piece sports ground back into Darley Playing Fields.

Along this section of riverbank during summer you may see Water Figwort with its tiny hooded red flowers and Nipplewort, a tall growing member of the daisy or dandelion family, which has small yellow flowers.

Mugwort, a relic of cultivation, may also be seen here. It is common in towns because it was used to flavour beer. If you rub one of the leaves between your fingers you will notice a strong aromatic scent.

In 1924, excavations on Parker's Piece revealed a Roman hypocaust, under-floor heating, next to the cricket pavilion.

Beyond Parker's Piece, the buildings on your right are prebendal, or monastic, farmhouses. The first house, Stone House Prebend, has large medieval chimneys and a datestone of 1594. The second, Derwent House, is separated from Stone House Prebend by Old Chester Road.

This part of the walk passes between the sites of two Roman Forts. The first, occupied between about 50 and 80AD, stood on the high ground to the west of the river, in the vicinity of the present Belper Road. The second occupied the lower ground, just east of the river, at what is now Little Chester, between about 80 and 370AD.

Between the bowling green and tennis courts, turn right back to the car park to finish the walk.

Location of walk



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Walk: Darley Abbey Circular.

Distance: 3½ kilometres, 2¼ miles.

Time: Allow 1¼ hours.

Timings based approximately on 1.6 kilometres, one mile every 30 minutes.

Further information

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