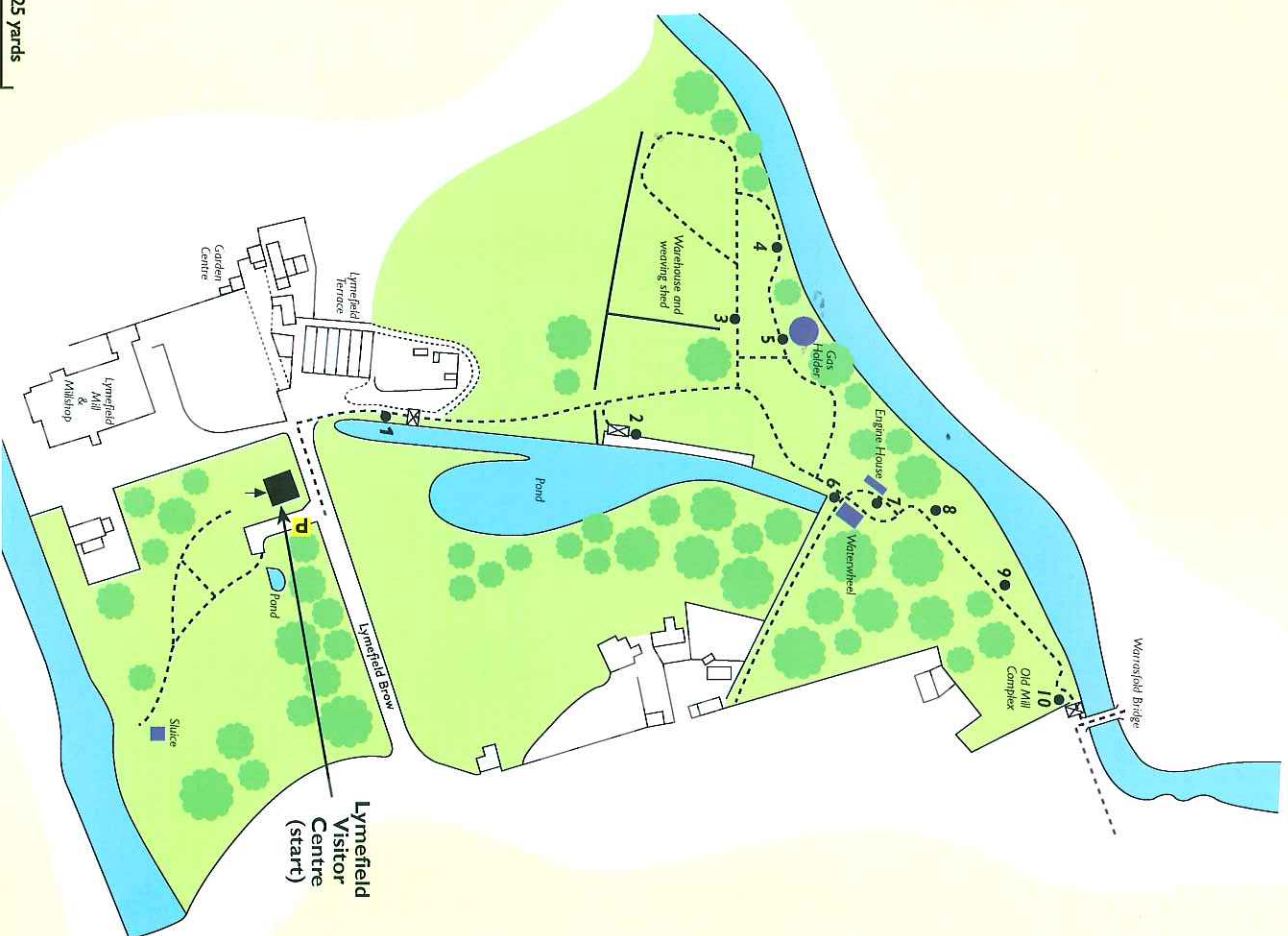


LYMEFIELD AND BROAD MILLS HERITAGE TRAIL

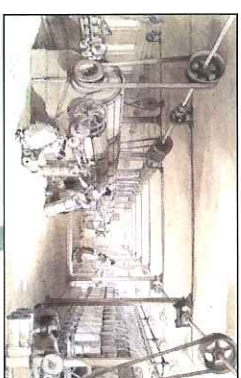
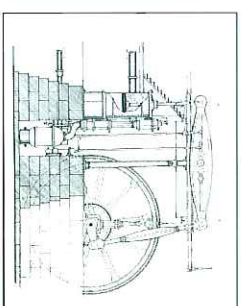


Tameside Countryside Service

LYMEFIELD AND BROAD MILLS

Heritage Trail

A half mile walk, along flat surfaced paths,
discovering the fascinating history of this
once thriving mill complex.



a landscape with its
roots in the past

LYMEFIELD AND BROAD MILLS

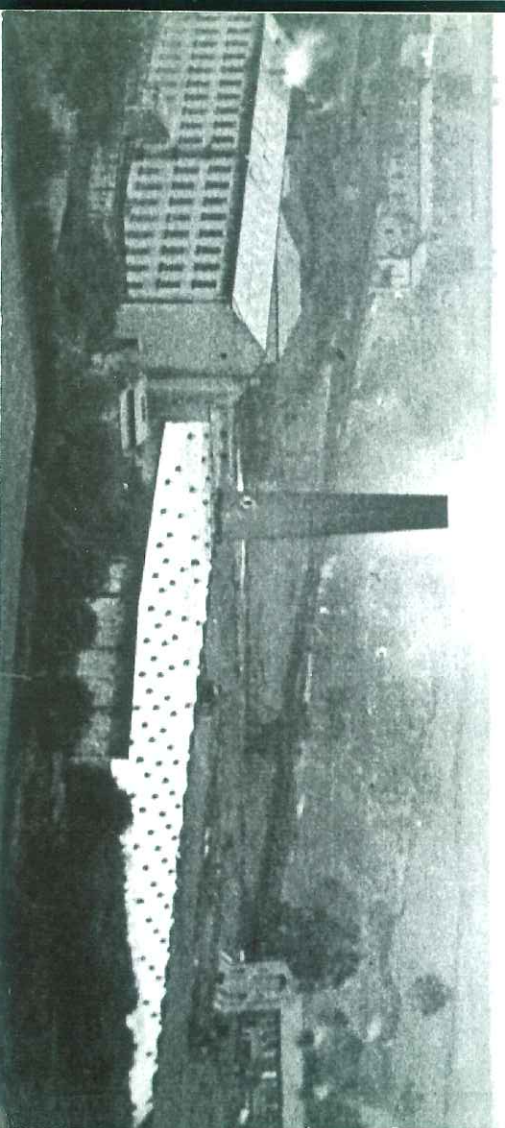
As you walk around this area today, it is hard to imagine that only 200 years ago you would have been surrounded by one of the largest textile mills in the area. With the closing and demolition of the mills, industry has given way to nature.



Where there were once weaving sheds, wildflowers bloom and attract a variety of insects like butterflies and grasshoppers. Trees have taken over the sites of the mills, and the woodlands are home to birds such as woodpeckers, great tits and chaffinches. The sweeping curve of the River Etherow forms the boundary of the site and kingfishers can sometimes be seen flying above. The water that turned the waterwheels is now home to ducks, moorhens and damselflies and the bats from around the site often hunt over the water on summer evenings.



Much of the area is wheelchair and buggy friendly. There are picnic areas and open spaces, paths through the woods for you to explore and pond and river banks where you can watch the wildlife. For younger visitors, this is the perfect place for getting closer to nature. There are nature wayfaring posts to discover and lots of places for adventurous play.



LYMEFIELD AND BROAD MILLS

Heritage Trail

A half mile walk, along flat surfaced paths, discovering the fascinating history of this once thriving mill complex.

Broad Mills, originally Broadbottom Mills, were the largest of several textile works which were established in and around Broadbottom from the late 18th century onwards.

This industry was largely responsible for transforming a rural landscape into the extensive village of today. The attraction of the area to early textile entrepreneurs lay in the natural resource of the River Etherow which, when harnessed through the construction of weirs and mill leats, provided a power source for the mill machinery.



Broadbottom Mills were established by William and George Sidebottom in the early 1800s and by 1824 included three large cotton spinning mills.

In the 1830s water power was supplemented by steam and the company added cotton weaving to its activities. In 1850 John Sidebottom further expanded the business with the construction of a large weaving shed and warehouse. John's gambling habits later led him into massive debts and he continued to run the mills only with financial help from his mother. The 1860s however brought the cotton famine and the closure of Broadbottom Mills. The community of the village, heavily dependent upon the textile industry was halved as people sought work elsewhere.

In the 1870s Broadbottom Mills reopened under the new ownership of the Hirst family. The early 20th century saw a change of name to Broad Mills and in the late 1930s, against a background of widespread decline the industry textile production at Broad Mills came to an end. In 1949, fire damage resulted in the demolition of the greater part of the mill complex.

In the 1980s Tameside MBC purchased the Broad Mills site and so began a programme of conservation and archaeological investigation which has revealed many of the key elements of this locally important industrial site.





1 From Lymefield Visitor Centre, turn left down the road and then right, in front of the row of houses, Lymefield Terrace.

As you follow the path towards the gate, to your right you can see a channel of water. This leaf, fed by water diverted from the River Etherow, filled a small reservoir.

2 Pass through the gate and onwards, passing between the stone walls, and turn to your right to the pond.

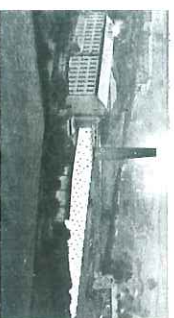
This was the reservoir that held the water that was then fed along the mill race to the left towards the mill wheel chamber. The waterwheel then powered the mill machinery.

3 Continue along the trail and take the turning to your left.

You are now walking through the site of the weaving shed and warehouse.

Built in 1850, it would have housed over 1000 power weaving looms.

Weaving sheds were constructed to a unique design. They were single storey buildings with long rows of north facing windows in the roof, giving a 'saw tooth' look when viewed from the side. This helped to provide the even lighting needed for weaving. Here at Broad Mills these skylights became known as the 'Northern Lights'.



Take a look at the wall at the back of the wildflower meadow.

This long interior wall is all that remains of the weaving shed, but you can still see the grooves marking the outline of the 'saw tooth' roof.



Child labour was widespread. They worked as piecers and scavengers. Orphans were often taken on as apprentices because they were a source of cheap labour.

4 Continue diagonally forward past the meadow bearing right with the path past the picnic table then take the path to the left through the trees.

You are now passing through the site of the large five storey warehouse.

With the arrival of the railway, goods could be stored and transported easily. By 1846, 22 trains a day passed through Broadbottom Station.

5 Continue to the circular stone ruins set into the grass.

This circular stone wall was the rim of a huge water tank.

It was part of the gasholder installed during the 1880s to store gas for lighting Broadbottom Mills.

Gas gave a better light than oil or candles and was cheaper once installed.

The gasholder consisted of a circular reservoir of water set into the ground. Set into it was another slightly smaller upturned tank. This second tank, open at the bottom and closed at the top, held the gas and would rise and fall as gas was introduced or used.

6 Continue along the path bearing left through the trees to the stone walls at the end.

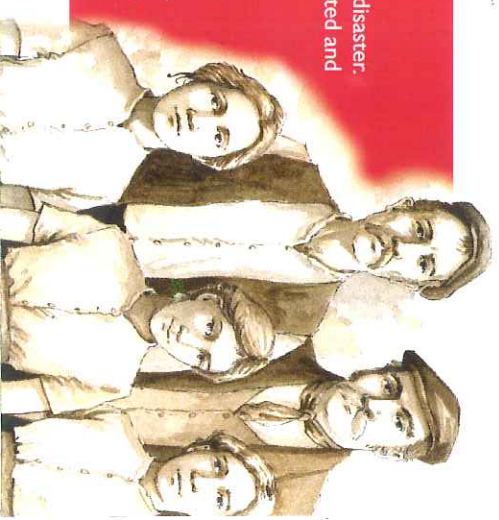
This area was the site of a large five storey cotton spinning mill. Over the wall you can see where the water from the leat entered the mill through the three arches.

A little further along to your left you can see the remains of the water channels and wheel chamber that lay in the mill basement.

The cotton famine

In the 1860s the village was struck by an economic disaster. During the American civil war no cotton was exported and the mills in Broadbottom closed.

"It was a hard time for us villagers with the mills shutting. Half of our neighbours moved out to look for work. Those of us who stayed put were near to starving and relied on the mill owners for handouts. Now Mr Hirst has bought and re-opened the mills, we've managed to get jobs again."

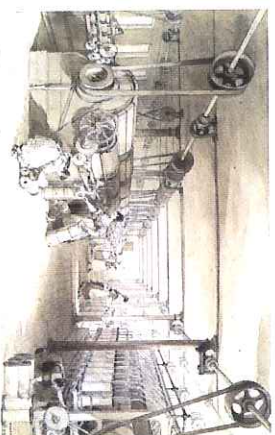


Water would have rushed through the three archways on the right into the wheel chamber. The water was regulated by sluice gates and turned a huge waterwheel.

You can see the deep wheel pit next to the railing. From this waterwheel, power was transmitted by a series of gears, shafts and belts to the machinery on the floors above.

The water then would flow through the arch on the left, possibly to supply further wheels.

We are hoping that future archaeological investigations will give us a clearer picture of how these complex water channels were used.



7

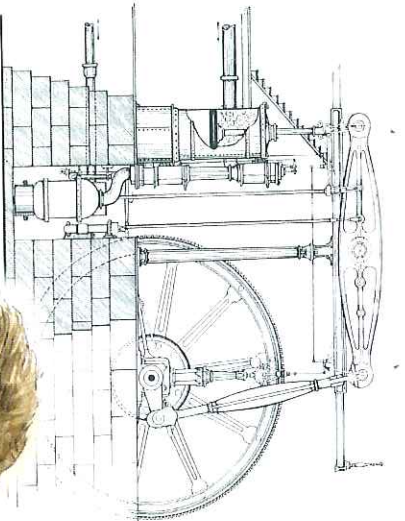
Behind you, through the trees, you may be able to see the railings that mark the site of the engine house.

If you take the path on the left you can see the ruins.

These ruins are all that remains of an engine house that stood at the gable end of the spinning mill. From 1830 onwards it provided power for the mill machinery.

The engine house contained a beam engine, the typical form of steam engine in mills of this period. Steam, from a nearby boiler house, was fed to a piston cylinder and cooled in a condenser to raise and lower a pivoting beam. This beam

was connected via a crankshaft to a flywheel, the rotary motion of which was transmitted to the system of gears, shafts and belts in the adjoining mill.



"Of course the boss wouldn't admit it... but I reckon I've got the most important job round here. If ever the flywheel stopped turning, then most of the looms would grind to a halt."



8

Continue the trail to the steps on your left, overlooking the banks of the River Etherow.

Set into the riverbank is the stone built arched opening that was the outflow from the wheel chamber of the 1824 cotton spinning mill.

9

Follow the trail through the woodland

You are now walking through the site of Old Mill. The footpath runs through the centre of what was once a single storey shed, built next to the river for weaving and preparing cotton. To your right were the two adjoining mills. The first built in 1802 by William and George Sidebottom, the second in 1814. Both were built for cotton spinning. To your right, standing five storeys high and over 300 feet (91 metres) long, the mill was an impressive structure.

As you walk through the woodland, you can spot the stone remains of the mill buildings.

10

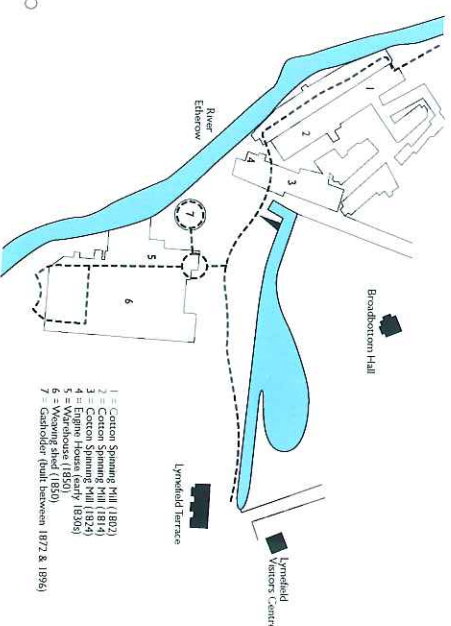
Continue along the trail until the wall is reached.

If you turn up the steps and turn left, you can better see the stone walls that mark the northern end of the mill complex.

Set into the basement wall of old mill by the river you can see a wide arched opening.

This was the outflow through which water, used to turned waterwheels, flowed back into the river.

The trail finishes here at the very place where Broad Mills first began....



- 1 = Cotton Spinning Mill (1802)
- 2 = Cotton Spinning Mill (1814)
- 3 = Cotton Spinning Mill (1824)
- 4 = Warehouse (1824)
- 5 = Warehouse (1850)
- 6 = Weaving shed (1850)
- 7 = Gateholder built between 1872 & 1896