

STEP 2: Across the road from the Wool Hub on Fore Street you'll find the Valiant Soldier.

This museum preserves an old pub and houses a small museum and local archive. Exhibits relating to the wool trade include the massive wool combs, a model of the town in its industrial heyday and examples of wool fabrics.

The buildings, barns and garden, backing on to the River Mardle, are an example of a medieval burghage plot. The medieval layout of the town is still evident in Fore Street. The alleyways or 'Opes' that lead off Fore Street, once led to the River Mardle on one side of the street, and the Dean Burn on the other, where the wool was washed.



Valiant Soldier



Kings Arms

Head up Fore Street and you'll come to the Kings Arms. In the mid-19th century, The Kings Arms was a coaching inn, and Buckfastleigh was a busy shopping centre. The landlord at the time was a wool stapler named John Churchward, of the 'Churchward's Mill' family. He kept a small flock of sheep in the pub garden and later in the 19th century there was a wool store at the rear of the pub which was operating until the 1960's.

STEP 3: At the top of Fore Street is the Globe Inn. There's a brief history of Buckfastleigh inscribed on the wall.

STEP 4: Take the road to the right of the Globe, stopping at the corner of the Car Park. Until the Mill was demolished you would have been standing in the Mill and looking at the Carding, sorting and spinning building. Turn right and head down Mardle Way.



At the bottom of the hill is Mardle House which was a large spinning shed. A few metres further on, Hamlyn House was a spinning mill, dated late 19th / early 20th centuries, and owned by the Hamlyn family. Return to Chapel Street.

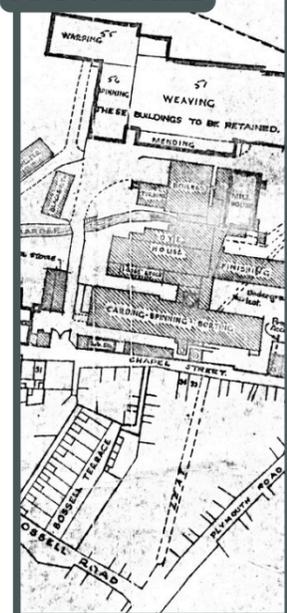
In 1920, after making their fortune, the Hamlyns sold the business to the Cooperative Wholesale Society.

At the time, the Cooperative was a much larger organisation; it took over the properties and running of the Mills.

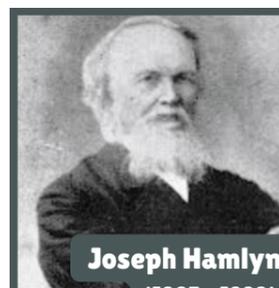
STEP 5: Beyond the Co-op, at 26 - 29 Chapel Street, are 4 tentering cottages with tenter lofts. Here, woven wool pieces were pinned out with tenter hooks to dry.

Opposite the Tentering Cottages, turn right into Orchard Terrace. These houses were mill workers cottages built by the Hamlyns. The properties would typically house more than one family and boarders, at no.9 in 1891 there was a total of 10 inhabitants.

Plan of the Mill



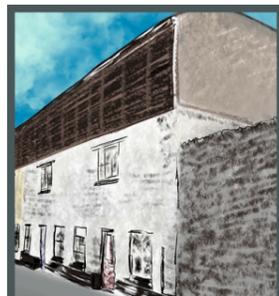
Hamlyn House



Joseph Hamlyn
(1807 - 1888)

"The cloth would have been pleated down and stretched over and under several rollers, suspended from the roof, from one side of the loft to the other where they would be weighted down. Hundreds of sharp tentering hooks, jutting out from the beams at each end of the room, would hold the ends of the cloth so it didn't slip. Then the louvres would be opened up and the damp air would come in and raise the pile. After the cloth would return to the mill to be cut up."

Terry Hallett (former mill worker)



Tentering Cottages

Sorting the Wool



At over 200 years old, the Tannery (the buildings in front of the chimney) is the U.K's oldest still in operation. Here, the wool was taken off the skin before being processed in the woollen mill. In the 1960's, the large building at the far side of the site, housed the wool combing factory.

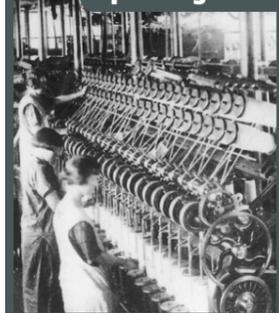
STEP 6: Past Orchard Terrace is the entrance to the Devonia Site. Unlike in many northern mill towns, the Buckfastleigh mills undertook all the different processes of cloth manufacture from start to finish - they worked with the raw wool until it became a piece of cloth. The Mill employed as many female workers as male and usually the women did the sorting, wool picking, spinning, weaving, warping and sewing of rugs, while most of the men worked in the tan yard.



Devonia Site

In the 1970s, this building was taken over by the British Wool Marketing Board, the top floor was a showroom, the middle floor was used for grading the wool bought from farmers and the ground floor was a store and packing area.

Town Mill Spinning Room



Devonia is all that remains of the wool industry in Buckfastleigh; they process fleeces but are not involved in yarn or cloth production. Walk back up to Chapel Street and turn right to the Methodist Church. Funded by mill owners, this imposing structure housed meeting rooms and a school. It was always more than a church, more of a community centre. Today this ethos is continued by the Moor Imagination Centre who run community projects and act as guardians of the building. No. 18 Chapel Street (Park View) was built in 1866 and home to the Hamlyn family. Wool was sold at auction in Exeter to buyers and some went to the Axminster Carpet factory in Buckfast to be woven into carpets and rugs.

STEP 7: Continue to the Market Street / Jordan Street junction and walk to Mardle Bridge. The houses in Higher Town are mostly older and smaller, some mid 17th century or earlier. A weekly market took place between 1353 and the 1800s. At the request of the Abbot at Buckfast, King Edward III granted a charter for a weekly wool market and this immediately expanded what had once been an industry centred on the Abbey to one in which Buckfastleigh (newly formed in 1350) played a major part. Market Street crosses the Mardle at Mardle Bridge, originally, a ford. In later years a leat crossed the road in a launder from a flour mill and a wool mill (known as Churchwards) on the left by the bridge - some parts are still visible. The leat also served the Hamlyn's fellmongery (on the site of the tannery). In 1851, 14 households in Market Street worked in the wool trade. By 1901, the area around Market Street, Silver Street and Jordan Street housed many families and 130 wool workers. Their jobs included serge and wool weavers, wool combers, wool sorters, pattern book makers, spinners and machine minders, finishers, and mill furnace stokers. Some were as young as 12 years old and one girl, Beatrice Bowden, boarded at the age of 14, working in the mill as a serge weaver.

STEP 8: Return along Market Street and Chapel Street and turn right into New Road, then left into Bossell Road. Here, a collection of buildings was all built between 1875 and 1887 by the Hamlyns and other mill owners. The primary school and town hall were built in 1887 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee; and to the right of the school, Bossell Terrace, built for the managers of the Wool Mill.

STEP 9: Continue to the corner of Bossell Road and Plymouth Road.

To your right, by the car park, the Hamlyns gave land for the park as well as an outdoor swimming pool.

Opposite the car park, you can see the Stockerbrook leat, flowing from the Dean Burn. It flows underground and emerges on the old mill site, next to the town centre car park. The mill owners and other industries were constantly arguing about the maintenance and use of the leats and waterways.

Return down Fore Street to reach the end of our trail...



Town Mill
from Chapel Street

STEP 10: The Wool Hub. This local project was set up to inspire the community to use and develop wool and wool crafts and to value the history of the wool industry in Buckfastleigh. The Wool Hub run courses in the various processes from fleece to yarn.

BUCKFASTLEIGH FACTS

The first documented evidence of Buckfastleigh dates back to 1286

The town market was granted in 1353 following the black death

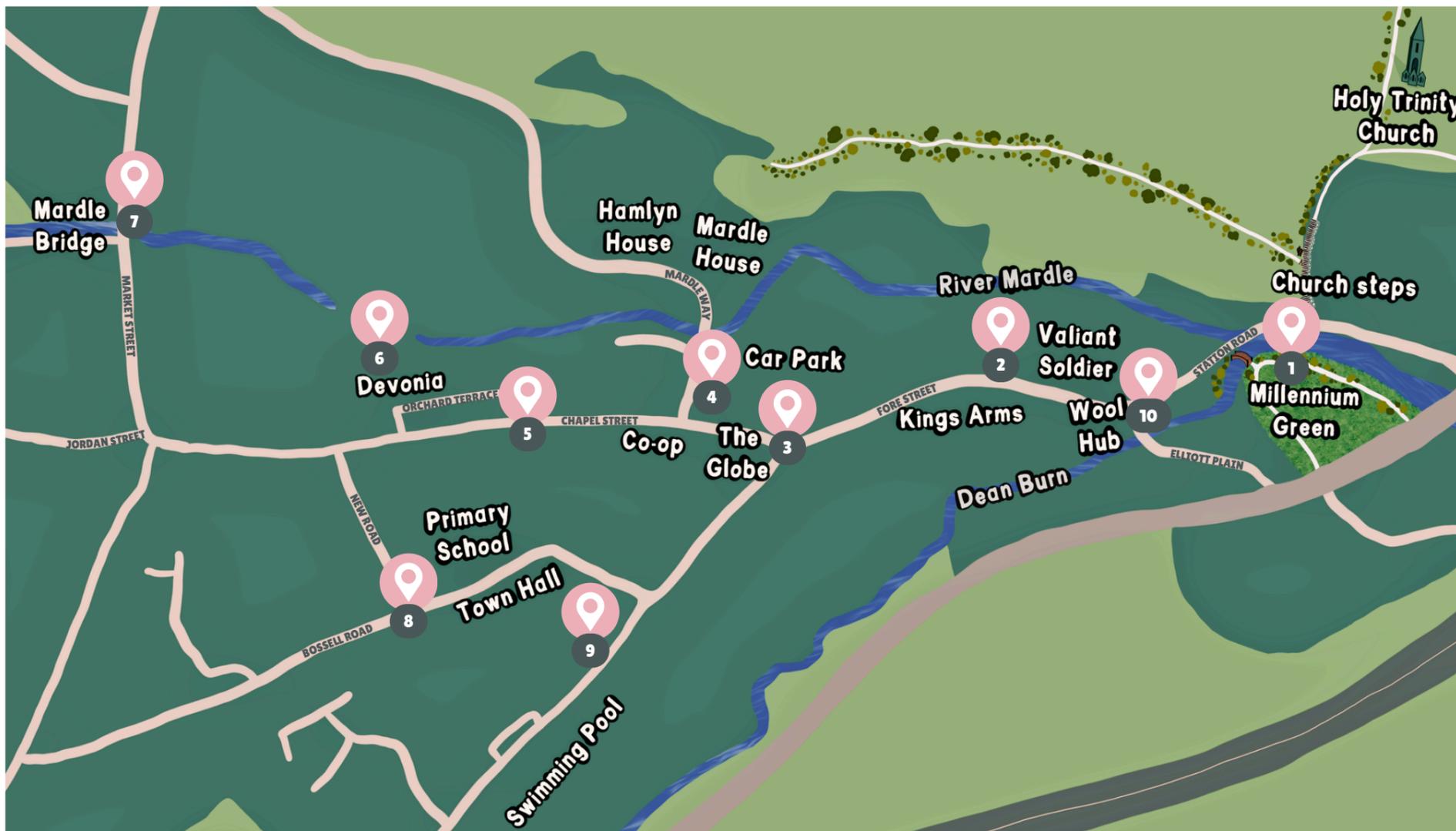


Wool History display at the Valiant Soldier

Find out more about local wool history at the Valiant Soldier or scan the Wool Hub QR code below

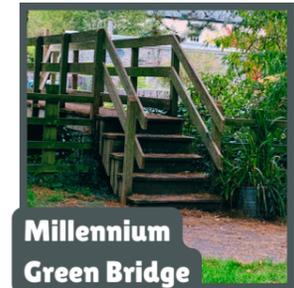


We hope you enjoyed the Heritage Wool Trail



The legacy of the town's industrial past was a time of building; of affluence for some but also of poverty. This industrial period was only a short and final episode in Buckfastleigh's relationship with wool that goes back millennia. There is very little evidence remaining of this earlier period, but as you will see at the end of this trail, in celebrating our heritage a revival of the old skills is taking place.

Start in the Millennium Green and enjoy your walk.



STEP 1: At the entrance to the Millennium Green, Church Bridge crosses the River Mardle, where it meets the Dean Burn and further on the River Dart. Notice how clean the water is. It wasn't always this way, especially after industrialisation, because of the lack of sanitation, combined with the filth and waste from wool processing.

Just beyond the bridge, a flight of stone steps (variously counted between 195–198) lead to the ruined Holy Trinity Church. From the churchyard can be seen Buckfast Abbey, largely responsible for the growth of the wool trade from earliest times. If you wish to climb the steps, the churchyard also houses a memorial to the Hamlyn family, the town's most important mill owner in the 19th and early 20th century. Exit Millennium Green over the bridge and head left towards the Wool Hub. To the left of the Wool Hub, Damarell's or Barter's Bridge crosses Dean Burn. Wool products bound for the ports of Totnes and Dartmouth would have left the town crossing this bridge and travelling along Elliot Plain, Old Totnes Road and over the Dart at Austin's Bridge.



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