



The building of the Bessalone Reservoir at Belper.

The Pumping Station and Bessalone (or Bessylone) Reservoir, Belper

One of the most substantial gifts given to the people of Belper by the Strutt family, who built the town's mills, was the water pumping station and reservoir, providing clean piped water for residents.

When George Henry Strutt died in 1895 it was reported in his obituary: *'Not only the cure and care of the sick in the cottage hospital but the prevention of sickness has been one of Mr. Strutt's ambitions, and to this end he has made several noble efforts to secure to the town a sufficient supply of pure water.'*

Earlier that year, he had offered an interest free loan of £11,700 to the local council for them to buy out the existing water company, which was not achieving the scale of scheme he wanted for the town. When he died three months later, his son George Herbert Strutt honoured his father's dying wish by cancelling the loan and increasing the offer, enabling work *'...to erect and complete the pumping works in the Meadows with all the necessary buildings, engines, boilers, machinery etc., including mains within the boundary wall; to purchase the site selected by the council at Bessylone (sic), to construct there a reservoir, to transfer the two sites ... when complete to the Council as a free gift.'*

Both the Pumping Station and the Reservoir at Bessalone were designed to a high standard. When in 1901, the Duke of Devonshire came to Belper for the formal transfer ceremony of the deeds for the pumping station and reservoir to the Belper Urban District Council, *'Bridge Street and King Street were spanned at frequent intervals by triumphal arches and streamers supported by decorated masts and the additional contribution of colour made by displays from every house and shop. Bunting and national flags gave the streets a very gay and festive appearance.'*

The Duke gave an address of thanks to Mr Strutt and presented him with a portrait of Strutt which had been subscribed to by friends as a show of gratitude for his gift to the town.

In 2016, shortly after UNESCO accepted that not all Attributes to a World Heritage Site must fall within its boundaries (see <http://www.derwentvalleymills.org/derwent-valley-mills-world-heritage-status/statement-of-outstanding-universal-value/values-and-attributes/> for information on Values and Attributes), the World Heritage Committee of ICOMOS-UK recognised the Bessalone reservoir as an Attribute contributing to the Outstanding Universal Value of the DVMWHS, despite it being outside the WHS and its Buffer Zone.