

Field Details

Site Ref No 4836

NAME

VALLEY GARDENS & SOUTH CLIFF GARDENS

SITE DESCRIPTION

Public gardens, comprising a series of seaside walks and gardens, laid out as publicly and privately owned features from the mid C19 to the 1930s, including work by Joseph Paxton in the 1850s.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1626, a mineral spring was discovered at the foot of the South Cliff, Scarborough. In 1827, the Cliff Bridge Company was given control of the Spa and the adjacent cliff walks in exchange for building the Cliff Bridge linking these facilities to the town. A new Spa promenade was opened in 1839, overlooked by a 'Gothic Saloon'¹ by Henry Wyatt. Gardens were laid out on the cliff by George Knowles, who lived at Woodend (now Wood End House) in The Crescent, where his own gardens were being developed concurrently.

In 1853 William Skipsey was appointed head gardener to the Spa, and in 1856 Sir Joseph Paxton (1803-765) built a Grand Hall of local stone to replace the Gothic Saloon, an extended promenade, a bandstand, and Italianate gardens with formal flower beds and balustraded stone staircases negotiating the steep cliffs. In 1860, a 'Swiss Chalet' was built near the northern entrance to the Spa Gardens and a summerhouse was added to the grounds in 1862. In the same year, at the north end of South Cliff, the 'People's Park' (now Valley Gardens) was laid out by the town Corporation on either side of Valley Road which led down to the seafront and the Spa promenade. This featured rockwork and a small pool which had formerly supplied water to cornmills demolished in the late 1850s. In 1862, Robert Williamson bought a skeleton iron bridge that had fallen into the River Ouse at York and re-erected it across the valley as Valley Bridge, giving vehicular access to the South Cliff. At the same time, the land along the top of the South Cliff was developed with an esplanade, private residences, and hotels. In 1874, the South Cliff Tramway Company built the first cliff tramway in Britain, which transported visitors up the cliff face adjacent to the Spa. In 1876, Paxton's Grand Hall burned down; it was replaced in 1880 by a new Grand Hall by Verity and Hunt which was built on the same footprint.

By 1880 the Corporation had commissioned William Skipsey to lay out the Holbeck Gardens, south of Dickinson's Point. This marked the beginning of further developments to the south of the Spa. The Belvedere Rosary was established from 1883 by George, Lord Beeforth, a successful art dealer. He built several properties at the southern end of the Esplanade, including his own house, connected to his Rosary by a subway. On the plateau below the Rosary he built a tennis court and walks along the cliff. The gardens were purchased from Beeforth by the Corporation in 1912. In the same year the Corporation bought from the Cliff Bridge Company c 2.4ha of undercliff between the tramway and the Belvedere Rosary. The money enabled the Company to enlarge the Spa promenade over the sands, and build a new bandstand; it was only in 1954 that the glass wings, originally planned as a means of uniting the bandstand with the Grand Hall, were constructed. The Corporation, in turn, embarked on a comprehensive scheme to unite the individual gardens and improve the cliffs between the Spa and the Holbeck Gardens to the south.

Harry W Smith was Scarborough's Borough Engineer from 1897 to 1933, and claimed to have enlarged the area of public gardens in Scarborough from 55 acres (c 22ha) to 350 acres (c 142ha). From c 1910 he laid out the South Cliff Gardens, where paths of easy gradient were edged with rocks from the beach, linking several

separate gardens. The highlight of the area was the 1912 Italian Garden. Much of the stone employed in this layout was extracted from the bottom of the cliff, where, by 1914, Smith was building what was reputedly the first open-air tidal bathing pool in Britain.

The Corporation benefited from donations by some wealthy residents. George, Lord Beeforth handed over land that enabled the Corporation to enlarge the Esplanade in 1899, while in 1911, Alfred Shuttleworth donated the Holbeck Clock Tower, erected on the Esplanade at the main entrance to the Holbeck Gardens, to \ commemorate the coronation of King George V. In the same year, Shuttleworth! presented to the town a garden he had laid out, including Miniature Gardens; these became known as the Shuttleworth Gardens.

Just below the Clock Tower, a new Putting Green was laid out at the end of the First World War and a pavilion had been erected on the north of the green by 1928. In the 1930s the Holbeck Gardens were renowned for their dahlia displays; tropical plants and cacti were favoured for 'a sheltered bed on the Esplanade during the summer months' (Lord c 1984). Finally, in 1957, the Grand Hall, Spa, and Gardens were themselves purchased by the Corporation, thus uniting the whole of the Valley Gardens, Spa Gardens, and South Cliff Gardens under one ownership.

In 1993, the Holbeck Hall hotel, built on the south bank of the Holbeck Ravine and overlooking the Holbeck Gardens, fell into the sea and took with it extensive parts of Skipsey's gardens. Measures to resist further encroachment have included the import of many tons of Norwegian boulders, to create 'rock-armour'¹ around the point at Holbeck. The site remains (2000) in public use.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The town presses upon the South Cliff Gardens to the north and the west. The sequence of gardens affords a long and continuous walk from a largely residential part of the town to the west, eastwards through Valley Gardens, and then southwards along the Esplanade overlooking South Cliff. The Valley Gardens flank Valley Road, a busy carriageway that runs c 600m east-north-east towards the sea. It passes underneath the Valley Bridge, which carries the A165, and Cliff Bridge (listed grade II), which gives pedestrian access to the Esplanade and the South Cliff from Cuthbert Brodrick's Grand Hotel (completed 1867) and the centre of town to the north.

The junction of the Valley Gardens and the foreshore is overlooked by the Swiss Chalet. The Spa and Grand Hall, surrounded by the Spa Gardens, lie c 400m to the south. Parts of this Paxton garden are obscured by the extensions added to the south side of the Grand Hall. The Spa Gardens are closed c 100m south of the Spa by the cliff tramway. Southwards from the cliff tramway, the South Cliff Gardens extend almost 900m along the steep cliff side. In places, the cliff walks are now (2000) closed because of erosion or the poor condition of the fencing. Of the separate garden areas, the Rosary lies c 450m south of the Grand Hall; the Tidal Pool at Dickinson's Point, c 500m south; the Italian Garden, c 550m south; the Holbeck Gardens, c 700m south; and the remnants of the Holbeck Ravine, c 900m south of the Grand Hall.

The majority of the South Cliff Gardens is fairly open, with views eastwards towards the sea. In contrast, the Rosary and the Italian Garden are formal, geometric, and enclosed. The Italian Garden is laid out on a curve and articulated by steps so that its topography and levels are married to the natural form of the cliff. Access and views into and out of these gardens are designed to be limited.

The Esplanade runs for c 1km along the cliff top, to the west of the gardens. From here, spectacular views are afforded, now (2000) obscured in parts by vegetation. The Esplanade is flanked on the west by a sequence of C19 hotels. One of the largest is the Prince of Wales, c 200m south west of the Grand Hall, near the top of the cliff tramway. Its southern elevation overlooks the Prince of

Wales Gardens, now open to the public. Further to the south are the Shuttleworth Gardens, c 750m south of the Grand Hall.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The gardens are accessible from many directions. Railings and gates control access to the South Cliff from the Esplanade. One highly ornamental, mid C19 cast-iron gate, c 250m north-west of the Grand Hall, is supported by piers in the Egyptian style, in the form of bound reeds or papyrus (listed grade II).

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

There are several significant buildings throughout the gardens. Verity and Hunt's Grand Hall (listed grade II) was formally opened by the Lord-Mayor of London in 1880. The stone building, which commands the Spa and the foreshore, is in a Late Renaissance style. The most significant views of the building and its sculptural roofs are afforded from the Esplanade.

The 1860 Swiss Chalet (listed grade II), standing c 350m north-north-west of the Grand Hall, has a timber first storey above a ground floor of banded black and red brick. It also features diamond-paned casement windows, a decorative timber verandah, and overhanging eaves supported on pierced timber brackets.

Dominant features of the Valley Gardens are the monumental ashlar stone piers and arches carrying the 1862 Valley Bridge and its iron superstructure.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens, united in public ownership since 1957, include several different elements. At the north end, the Valley Gardens link the town on the west with the foreshore. Along the cliffs to the south lie the Spa and the South Cliff Gardens, which include at least four areas of different character linked by cliff walks. At the top of the cliff, the Esplanade features display beds and, on its west side, the Prince of Wales Gardens and the Shuttleworth Gardens.

The Valley Gardens, which terminate the north end of the registered site, are bisected by Valley Road and pass beneath Valley Bridge. At the west end, on a small island at the centre of the pool, stand the remains of a rustic timber pavilion, probably mid to late C19 in origin. A few metres to the east is a cascade, part of its ornamental rockwork being built up against one of the bridge piers.

Flanking the west side of the Grand Hall are Paxton's Italianate Spa Gardens, dominated by the formality of the balustraded steps and linear paths that zig-zag steeply up the cliff face. The Spa Gardens were formerly ornamented with colourful bedding, of which little remains. To the south, punctuating the serpentine South Cliff walks for c 200m, there are several small early C20 chalets and shelters, characterised by steep, red-tiled roofs. These, now in poor condition (2000), are often placed at the junctions of paths.

The 1880s Rosary is shaded by adjacent vegetation, but the geometric structure is still quite clear. In the 1912 Italian Garden, c 100m to the south of the Rosary, there is a figure of Mercury on a pedestal at the centre of a stone-kerbed lily pool; this is now (2000) a resin copy of the original. To the north and south of the pool, what were rose beds are replaced by bedding displays. Two classical stone summerhouses at the north and south ends of the garden are in poor condition.

The 1912 Tidal Swimming Pool, c 150m east of the Italian Garden, is monumental in scale and sculptural in form; it is overlooked from the cliff top and is surrounded by chalets and dressing huts.

The Holbeck Gardens and putting green, c 200m south of the Italian Garden, are open in character. Parts of the most southerly area of these gardens were lost in the 1993 landslip. On the west side of the Esplanade, c 50m west of the entrance to the Holbeck Gardens, lies the entrance to the Shuttleworth Miniature Gardens.

The vegetation that clothes the South Cliff is now (2000) predominantly sycamore, with some pine, oak, and birch. Evidence suggests that there was formerly a wide variety of trees and shrubs (Prescott 1965785).

REFERENCES

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G Lord, *Scarborough's Floral Heritage, Over 40 Years of Parks and Gardens In Britain's First Resort*, (Scarborough Borough Council c 1984)
'The Man Behind Scarborough's Gems', *Evening News*, 5 October 1993, p 22
"Secret Garden Turns Public", *Evening News*, 13 July 1996
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Maps

OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition surveyed 189071, published 1893
3rd edition published 1912
1919 edition
1929 edition
1939 edition

Archival items

Early to mid C20 postcards of South Cliff Gardens, Scarborough (Scarborough Local Studies Library)
D and C Prescott, *The Prescott Collection 1, (22/A (1965785))*, (North Yorkshire County Library, Scarborough)
S Foord, *Harry W Smith A M Inst C E, Borough Engineer and Surveyor of Scarborough 189771933: an appreciation* (nd), (North Yorkshire County Library, Scarborough)

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