

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HIGH TOR

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**HIGH TOR**

Name:	HIGH TOR
County:	Derbyshire
District:	Derbyshire Dales (District Authority)
Parish:	Matlock Town
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.125883 Longitude: -1.5562593 National Grid Reference: SK 29791 58838 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001417 Date first listed: 04-Aug-1984

## Details

C19 pleasure ground which exploited the dramatic qualities of the Derwent valley. The site has group value with Heights of Abraham (qv), Derwent Gardens (qv), Lovers Walks (qv), and Willersley Castle(qv), a group of parks and pleasure grounds with common origins in the exploitation of the dramatic scenic qualities of the gorge of the River Derwent.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Matlock Bath developed as a spa during the late C17 and early C18. During the late C18 and early C19 communications were improved and the town became a popular summer resort for tourists who by this time were attracted by the dramatic scenery and caves as much as the waters. Notable visitors included Byron who compared Matlock Bath to Switzerland. High Tor was recorded as a sublime feature inspiring awe and dread by a series of C18 and C19 travellers and writers and was the subject of innumerable drawings and paintings by artists including Thomas Smith of Derby, J M W Turner, Alexander and John Cozens, and Joseph Wright. The often-used vantage point still bears the name Artists' Corner. The Tor was visited in the C18 and early C19 when there were no formal walks, though there would have been some paths worn by lead miners. The 1742 edition of Defoe's *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* describes a hermit's cell near the top. By the 1840s the recognised route to the summit was from the east, from Side Lane, now (late C20) Starkholmes Road. Peter Arkwright of Willersley Castle (qv) enclosed the grounds c 1860 and constructed pedestrian paths from a new entrance on the south side approached from the bridge to Matlock Bath railway station. The entrance from Starkholmes Road was retained and could be used by carriages. A pathway was formed through Fern Cave (scheduled ancient monument) and another on a narrow ledge along part of the cliff face. In 1879 the grounds were leased to the Matlock and High Tor Recreation Grounds Company Ltd and Milner of London was retained to supervise landscaping. Arkwright's Grand Walk, also used by carriages, was created, leading south to the summit from a gateway in Pig Tree Lane, now (late C20) Pic Tor Lane. A refreshment room was erected near the summit, tennis and quoit or skittle grounds were constructed close to a modified southern entrance and additional paths put in with a broad flight of steps. A worked-out lead mine rake was opened to the public as the Roman Cave. In 1903 an additional pedestrian entrance was made across a new suspension bridge constructed over the River Derwent just south of Artists' Corner. The Company's lease expired in 1975. The site is now (1998) in the ownership of Derbyshire Dales District Council.

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## DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The western boundary of the site is the foot of the line of limestone cliffs which tower above the east bank of the River Derwent. The grassy summit of the c 9ha site slopes back away from the cliff edge to a largely C19 fenced boundary with agricultural land on the east side, dips to the north to a boundary with Pic Tor Lane and falls away more steeply to the south through woodland to a walled boundary with the lane from Matlock Bath to Starkholmes.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** On the north side of the site there is a C19 gateway with stone gate piers at the west end of Pic Tor Lane which leads to a track called the Grand Walk leading to the summit. A viewpoint, Little Switzerland, c 400m up the slope, offers the first dramatic glimpse of the scenery over the gorge to the west. A gated vehicular entrance from Starkholmes on the east side of the site leads to a metalled road running west to the summit. The pedestrian entrance from the south is close to the Heights of Abraham cable-car station and leads to a winding path through steep woodland to the top of the Tor. The southern approach links with a footpath running south to Matlock Bath railway station. The entrance from the west is no longer in use. The suspension bridge has been demolished; only the bridge piers survive in the wall beside the A6 road near the former High Tor Hotel.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The route to the summit of the Tor from the lane to Starkholmes passes behind the Heights of Abraham cable-car station (1984), built on a former tennis court, and below the derelict quoit ground. It then winds up by interconnected paths to cliff-edge viewpoints. The road from the eastern entrance intersects from the east. The pedestrian can follow the road to the top passing over the west end of the Roman Cave, or take the path closer to the cliff edge off which runs the cliff-ledge path, Giddy Edge, or walk further east along the east side of the Fern Cave. All arrive at or close to the site of the former summit cafe. The building was damaged by fire and demolished in 1995. An arched stone shelter, probably of C19 date, stands opposite the entrance to Fern Cave. The caves were important attractions in the C19 and C20. The entrances to both the Fern and Roman Caves are barred (1999). The northern part of the summit is grassed. A cricket pitch was laid out on the eastern side in 1897. The Grand Walk leads north to the entrance on Pic Tor Lane. The vantage points along the edge of the scarp offer changing and dramatic views over the gorge. High Tor Hotel (listed grade II) on the west side of the river (outside the registered area) is of the early C19 in cottage orné style, reflecting the romantic and picturesque ideals the scenery was thought to embody. Ribber Castle (listed grade II), built in 1862, is prominent in views to the east.

It is located within the buffer zone of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage site.

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 14/11/2011

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.

## Bibliographie

### Books and journals

Abel Heywood & Sons, , Matlock Bath (guidebook), (c1905 and 1911)

Derbyshire Countryside Ltd, , Matlock Bath (guidebook), (1993)

Derbyshire Dales District Council, , Matlock Bath (illustrated guidebook), (c1995)

Jewitt, A, Matlock Bath (guidebook), (1837; 1888)

Pevsner, N, Williamson, E, The Buildings of England: Derbyshire, (1978), 273

### Other

J Gratton, Plan of Matlock Bath and its Vicinity, 1848 [all maps in Lyne and Assocs 1997]

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1879

OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1899

The Matlock Parks, Proposals for a Restoration Management Plan, (Ian Lyne and Associates 1997)