

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LOVERS WALKS

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

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LOVERS WALKS

Name: LOVERS WALKS

County: Derbyshire

District: Derbyshire Dales (District Authority)

Parish: Cromford

County: Derbyshire

District: Derbyshire Dales (District Authority)

Parish: Matlock Bath

label.localisation: Latitude: 53.118860
Longitude: -1.5602164
National Grid Reference: SK 29531 58055
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II*
List Entry Number: 1001416
Date first listed: 04-Aug-1984

Details

Walks laid out during the mid C18 in association with the development of the Matlock Bath spa which encouraged visitors to enter and explore the dramatic natural scenery of the Derwent valley. The site has group value with the Heights of Abraham (qv), High Tor (qv), and Derwent Gardens (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 and from the beginning the dramatic scenery was as much an attraction as the waters. During the late C18 and early C19 communications were improved and the town became a popular summer resort. Notable visitors included Byron, who compared Matlock Bath with Switzerland, and the artists J M W Turner, Zuccarelli, Joseph Wright, and Joseph Farington. Thomas Smith of Derby's drawings of 1742, engraved by Vivares (Lyne and Assocs 1997), illustrate Lovers Walks in use as a level path along the east bank of the river, and the 1742 edition of Defoe's *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* describes additional ornamentation and landscaping to achieve views from the top of the cliff. Direct access was by ferry or boat, but from the end of the C18 it was possible to walk through the grounds of Willersley Castle (qv) from Cromford. The first bridge associated with the Walks was the Jubilee Bridge constructed in 1887, at which time the grounds were officially extended northwards to form the promenade where the bandstand was added in 1893.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Lovers Walks lie on the east side of the River Derwent in Matlock Bath. The c 5ha site occupies land which rises precipitously to a limestone ridge from the east bank of the river, which

forms the western boundary. A stone wall at the south end of the site divides it from the private grounds of Willersley Castle while on the east side a C20 fence divides the site from open agricultural land.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are two main approaches to the Walks from bridges over the Derwent: Jubilee Bridge, made by the Butterley Company and opened in 1887, leads into the site from North Parade; while New Bridge (1969) leads over the river from Derwent Gardens on the south side of the site. The ferry crossing, the principal means of entry before 1887 and retained in use until the mid C20, is marked by landing stages just south of the Pavilion. In 1997 a path was constructed from Matlock Bath railway station car park to an entrance at the north end of the grounds.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The basic framework consists of a riverside path and a cliff-top path running north/south approximately parallel with one another. These are linked by several paths winding through steep wooded slopes. The north end of the riverside path was formalised as a promenade called the Jubilee Grounds in 1887. This area became a venue for riverside entertainments and a bandstand, flanked by rockeries, was added in 1893. A stepped path leads up the slope from a point c 20m east of the bandstand. By c 1900 this had been linked to the cliff-top path and it is now joined by the path from the station car park. A second stepped path leads up the slope from the north side of the bandstand. The riverside path leads south and there are views over the water to the north and west, and up to towering tree-clad limestone cliffs to the east. Some 60m to the south of Jubilee Bridge is an area occupied by a children's playground which was the site of animal houses and an aviary from the 1920s to the 1940s. An arched tufa shelter situated here is a modified grotto painted by George Robertson in 1798 (Lyne and Assocs 1997); it also appears in Joseph Farington's drawing published in 1817 (*ibid*). It is thought to mark the northern limit of the original riverside walk. Close to this point a stepped path called Birdcage Walk leads up the slope. This had been formed by 1785 and it may be one of the walks attributed to William Emes (1730-1803) (Tate Gallery Catalogue 1990). Where the path runs close to the river a shaped opening on the opposite bank marks the site of a C19 petrifying well. A little further on, c 180m south of Jubilee Bridge and on the east side of the path, are two small buildings. The first was a shelter for ferry passengers from the early C19 or before, and the second was a C19 spa shop. The ferry landings, in use until c 1950, are still visible. The Walks end at a gate leading into the private grounds of Willersley Castle. From here there is a view across the river to a waterfall cascading into the west side of the Derwent. The flow is now constrained in a pipe under the A6 road but this feature was the subject of Thomas Smith of Derby's painting *Cascades Below Matlock Bath*, c 1750 (Lyne and Assocs 1997). The scene formed the original focal point at this end of Lovers Walks.

Paths run up the wooded slope from this point to a walkway cut into the hillside which leads beneath the limestone cliffs and up to the top of the ridge. From the C18 these routes were used by the gardener returning visitors to Lovers Walks from the guided tours of Willersley Castle gardens. Viewing platforms are sited at various points, but some of the views of the Derwent and the town beyond are partially or completely obscured by trees (1999). A summerhouse marked on the 1879 OS map but not on that of 1899 lay beside a spot marked Lover's Leap, on top of the scarp c 120m south of Jubilee Bridge, close to the top of Birdcage Walk. The path runs along the ridge at the edge of the woodland and there are fine views of the north end of Matlock Bath and High Tor to the north, and Starkholmes and Riber Hill to the east. Some 100m south-east of Jubilee Bridge the path is joined by the stepped path which runs up from the riverbank near the bandstand.

It is located within 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

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Other

Additional information from Mrs D Buxton

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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)