

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

River Gardens

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

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River Gardens*

Name:	River Gardens
County:	Derbyshire
District:	Amber Valley (District Authority)
Parish:	Belper
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.030407 Longitude: -1.4842052 National Grid Reference: SK 34689 48249 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001372 Date first listed: 12-Dec-1997 Date of most recent amendment: 20-Aug-2013 Statutory Address 1: Belper River Gardens, Matlock Road, Belper, DE56 1BE

Historique de la conservation

Until 1905 the site was an osier bed owned by G Herbert Strutt, whose family had initiated the industrialization of the lower Derwent valley in the late C18. Strutt himself was an important local figure, a major landowner and employer, a County Councillor and JP, and a patron and benefactor. In 1897 the family firm amalgamated with fourteen other cotton-spinning companies to form the English Sewing Cotton Company, and Strutt joined the main board.

The formation of the River Gardens followed the setting up in 1905 of the Belper Boating Association. Strutt was among the parties behind that initiative, and in the winter of 1905-6 provided the money for the laying out of the River Gardens with a new boathouse, tea house and bandstand, and an enlarged promenade next to the river. The layout and rockwork was provided by Pulham & Son of Broxbourne. The Gardens were open to the public, and advertisements suggest that, at least in the early years, it was intended that events there should rival those such as 'Venetian nights' - of the long-established resort of Matlock Bath, further upstream. In 1918, after the demise of the Belper Boating Association, the Gardens were taken over by ESCC Ltd, and although run as a part of the recreational facilities provided for the firm's workers, the public continued to be admitted. In 1966 the River Gardens were passed to Belper Urban Borough Council, at which time the 1d admission charge was abolished. The park is retained by the successor body, Amber Valley District Council. In 2009 Amber Valley District Council undertook a major refurbishment and restoration of the River Gardens. This included the promenade, paths, landscape, mill lade and boating kiosk. A decorative gate was also introduced at the entrance of the car park.

Details

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The River Gardens lie on the northern outskirts of the town of Belper, on the east bank of the River Derwent. To the east the Gardens are bounded by the A6 trunk road northward from Belper to Matlock. The southern end of the River Gardens is dominated by the massive red-brick East Mill, built in 1911-12.

To the west the view is across the river to the suburban estate of Mount Pleasant, although longer and more rural views are enjoyed over the Horseshoe Weir and down the river, to the south-west. The area here registered comprises c 3ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The Gardens are approached from the south through a small car park on the south side of East Mill. The car park overlies the in-filled south end of the Mill Lade. The small iron footbridge which historically provided the main access across the Lade and from the Gardens to the Pavilion of 1908 survives on the north side of the car park. There is no lodge, gates or other means of controlling access to the Gardens. Earlier however there had been pay chalets with turnstiles, erected in 1920. A footbridge over the sluice gates still provides access to the gardens.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The River Gardens occupy a level strip of land, 250m north/south by up to 70m wide, along the east bank of the River Derwent, here c 80m wide. The greater part of the Gardens, on the river frontage, comprises well-kept lawns, beds, and walks, with several buildings providing services. The east side of the Gardens has a wilder character, with a long pool, rockeries, and denser planting.

At the extreme south end of the Gardens is a small modern toilet block. Thirty metres to the north-east, and effectively marking the start of the Gardens proper, is the corrugated-iron Boat House of 1905-6. Built by the Boating Association after they were granted access to the lands, with right to use the river in April 1905. This is partly hidden from the Gardens to the north by a 2.5m high Pulhamite rockwork screen along its north side. From the Boat House four paths lead north-east for c 120m to the Tea House area. The broadest forms a promenade along the river bank. To its east are meticulously kept, 10m wide, flat lawns with flower beds, midway along which is a Pulhamite rockwork fountain of 1906, with water gurgling from the top of a low, irregular rocky mass. The second path leads along the east side of those lawns and the fountain. The third, axial and main path lies c 10m to the east. Midway along it, 75m north-east of the Boat House in the centre of the Gardens, is a dodecagonal bandstand (listed Grade II). Of 1906-7, this was designed by Messrs Hunter of Woodhouse, built by Messrs Wheeldon of Belper, and its striking ogee-shaped copper roof supplied by Messrs Ewart of London. Set around it are a dozen benches. The lawns to either side of the axial path are planted with shrubs and largely coniferous specimen trees.

The fourth path, 10m to the east, is slightly winding, and runs along the west bank of the former Mill Lade, which now forms a 120m long, 12m wide pool along the east side of the Gardens. Sections of the edge of the pool are retained with Pulhamite rockwork, and spaced out along the pool are four small artificial islands. Immediately beyond the north end of the pool is a large mass of Pulhamite rockwork, through which steps from the Tea House lead to two terraced paths which runs south-west along the east side of the pool to the footbridge at the south end of the Gardens. Rising above these paths is the 3-4m tall stone retaining wall which forms the eastern boundary of the gardens.

Close to the north end of the Gardens, 70m north-east of the bandstand, is the Tea House. Designed by Hunter & Woodhouse of Belper, the 15m long, Swiss-chalet-style building, has thin, applied timber framing, and a deep hipped roof which extends over the verandah along the front of the building. The Tea House was originally roofed with heather, although by 1907 that had been replaced by red tiles.

The original tea rooms were deemed to small soon after construction, and another refreshment pavilion was built at the southern end of River Gardens in the winter of 1907/08. In 1909 it was said to be capable of seating 600 (Spence 1909). This was demolished in 1965 to make way for a lorry park.

The Tea House looks 20m west across a lawn to the main landing stage for boats. This is served by a small half-timbered kiosk in the same style as the Tea House although somewhat later, certainly post-1916. To the north of the Tea House is a less formal lawn with trees. East of that and the Tea House, and overlying a 60m long section of the Mill Lade, is a Children's Play Area with modern play equipment.

River Gardens is located within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage site.

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

Summary

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Public pleasure garden laid out by the River Derwent in 1905 by leading philanthropist associated with Belper's cotton-milling industry.

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.

Reasons for Designation

River Gardens, Belper, opened in 1905, is designated at Grade II* for the following principal reasons: * Date: the park is an early C20 example of a municipal pleasure garden; * Design: its design is essentially unchanged from its original layout; * Designer: the pleasure garden was designed and laid out by Pulham and Sons; * Historic interest: River Gardens was a philanthropic gift by the local industrialist G Herbert Strutt; * Structures: River Gardens retains various early recreational structures including boathouses, and Pulhamite rockwork; * Group value: River Gardens lies within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

Bibliographie

Books and journals

Spence, H A , The Borough Pocket Guide to Belper, ((1909 and subsequent edns)

Other

Belper Boating Association, leaflet on River Gardens (nd, c 1907),

Belper Town Map, c1880

Bowman, B, Report on River Gardens (September 1995) [copy on EH file]

Journal of Regional & Local Studies, Vol 7 (2), 1987, pp 1-14

River Gardens Belper, Derbyshire: Historic Landscape Appraisal Volume I [18.08.09] Parklands Consortium Ltd ,

River Gardens Belper, Derbyshire: Historic Landscape Appraisal Volume II [18.08.09] Parklands Consortium Ltd,