

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE LONG WALK, KNARESBOROUGH

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
THE LONG WALK, KNARESBOROUGH

Name: THE LONG WALK, KNARESBOROUGH

County: North Yorkshire

District: Harrogate (District Authority)

Parish: Knaresborough

label.localisation: Latitude: 54.003759
Longitude: -1.4713373
National Grid Reference: SE 34749 56544
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000132
Date first listed: 01-Mar-1988

Details

A town walk, laid out in the mid C18, on a site used as a promenade prior to this date.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Knaresborough had developed as a popular spa town from the late C16 by which time the Dropping Well, which is a feature of the Long Walk, was well known. It is mentioned in the writings of diarists and travellers including John Evelyn (1654), Oliver Heywood (1660), John Ray (1661), Ralph Thoresby (1692) and Celia Fiennes (1697). In 1626 Knaresborough was promoted as a spa by Edmund Deane in his popular book 'Spadacrene Anglica, or the English Spawe Fountain' and this led to increasing numbers of visitors to the Dropping Well who used Knaresborough as a base for visiting wells in nearby Harrogate.

The Walk developed as a means of access to the Well and the added attractions of views of the river gorge and Castle ruins were mentioned by Daniel Defoe in the early C18. In c 1739 Sir Henry Slingsby, who owned the land, improved the path and planted trees along the river bank. The Walk was described by Dr Adam Hunter as a 'beautiful and romantic walk' in 1807 and its popularity continued through the C19 and C20. The Slingsby estate was sold in 1916 and the Walk was purchased by J Simpson. Since that time it has been developed as an attraction centring around a cave close to the Dropping Well called Mother Shipton's Cave. The site remains in private ownership (1998).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Long Walk extends for c 1km along the west bank of the River Nidd which runs through a gorge along the western side of the town. The c 4ha site is bounded by High Bridge at the north end, a fence dividing the sides of the gorge from agricultural land to the west, Low Bridge at the south end and by the eastern bank of the Nidd.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are entrances at the north and south ends of the site. At the north end the entrance is from Harrogate Road on the south side of High Bridge where there is a late C20 entrance with gates and turnstiles flanked by a lodge and late C20 cafe, gift shop and toilet complex. At the south end there is a path running north from Blands Hill on the south side of Low Bridge which leads to a gate and a building housing an entrance kiosk and museum. The site is controlled so that most visitors enter at the north end and exit at the south end.

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
THE LONG WALK, KNARESBOROUGH

OTHER LAND A road leads from the north entrance south along the wooded riverside, beneath a C19 viaduct, to car parks. From this point the route continues alongside the river between mature trees. There are views along the route of the bridges, the viaduct and of the remains of Knaresborough Castle (scheduled ancient monument) which is sited high on a bluff overlooking the gorge c 400m south-east of the north entrance. There is a weir, and on the opposite bank a former mill c 300m south-east of the north entrance. From this point the path climbs and follows a route parallel to the river bank with views down the slope to the river between the trees.

Some 500m south of the north entrance there is a small stone building with an attached stone gateway from which concrete steps lead down to the Dropping Well on the riverbank. The steps appear to be in the same position as those shown on engravings of 1739 and of the early C19. The Well is formed by a stream which runs across a level rocky surface at the head of the Well, and then drips over a grooved rock formation with small stalactites along its lower edge which bulges out from the cliff edge. The water contains a strong solution of minerals which precipitate as it runs over the rock and drips down. This quality means that the shape of the rock cap at the top of the Well and the configuration of grooves and stalactites changes over time, hence the slightly differing appearance of the Well in prints and engravings over the years. Objects placed in the flow of the water petrify in a relatively short space of time which varies from three or four months to several years according to size. This property, the supposed curative powers of the water, and the striking appearance of the Well, were responsible for its popularity and for the development of Knaresborough as a spa town. John Leland described it in 1538 as 'a welle of a wonderful nature callid Droping welle. For out of the great rokkes by it distillith water continually into it. This water is so could and of such a nature that what thing so ever is caste in, or growth about the rokke, and is touchid of this water, groweth ynto stone' (quoted in Kellet 1991). The tradition of placing objects for petrification in the flow of the water continues to the present day (1998). Celia Fiennes, who visited the well in 1697, described an arbour next to the well 'where Company used to come and eat a Supper there in an evening to have the pleaseing prospect and the murmuring shower to divert their eare' (Morris 1948).

Immediately north of the Well there is a small cave at the base of the cliff called Mother Shipton's Cave, which is reputed, in a tradition which probably has C19 or C20 origins, to be the birthplace of a C15 soothsayer who was popularised in a pamphlet published in 1667 which stated that she was born near the Dropping Well. The rhymed prophecies attributed to Mother Shipton which appeared in the pamphlet proved so popular that subsequent pamphlets with more extravagant predictions appeared, and the tradition continued at least until 1873 when forgeries of Tudor pamphlets were made by a Brighton bookseller.

The Walk continues from the Well southwards alongside the river from which point it is planted with a beech avenue which continues to the south entrance. Sir Henry Slingsby is said to have planted such an avenue as part of the improvements of c 1739 (Kellet 1991).

REFERENCES Anon, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1769), pp 132-3 J Hunter (ed), *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby* (1830), p 218 R Lennard (ed), *Englishmen at Rest and Play* (1931), pp 14-15, 24-5, 44-5 C Morris (ed), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1948), pp 78-9 A Kellet, *Historic Knaresborough* (1991), pp 25-7, 41-4, 57

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1851

Illustrations [all reproduced in Kellet 1991] Engraving of the Dropping Well, January 1739 Engraving of the Dropping Well, 1746 Engraving of the Dropping Well and Castle, early C19

Description written: July 1998 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: October 1999

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.