

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

VALLEY GARDENS

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

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Name:	VALLEY GARDENS
County:	North Yorkshire
District:	Harrogate (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.988338 Longitude: -1.5585095 National Grid Reference: SE2904654789 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001076 Date first listed: 10-May-1984

Details

A public park with early to mid C19 origins which was laid out in the 1880s with additions of the 1930s. The site originated as open land with natural sulphur and chalybeate springs which was protected from enclosure by an Act of Parliament of 1770.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Harrogate was situated in the Royal Forest of Knaresborough and it began to develop as a village in the C15 when a chantry chapel was established in High Harrogate. The settlement increased in size following publicisation of the presence of numerous sulphurous and chalybeate wells in the area which attracted increasing numbers of visitors seeking cures. Twenty bathing houses had been established by 1693, and Celia Fiennes, visiting in 1697 described the smell of the waters as 'strong and offensive' (Morris 1948). Following attempts to enclose the Royal Forest, The Stray, a horseshoe-shaped swathe of land linking High Harrogate and Low Harrogate, was designated under an Act of Parliament of 1770 and an Award of 1778 (amended by the Harrogate Stray Act 1985) as an area which could never be enclosed, thus guaranteeing open access to many of the wells and safeguarding the industry which had grown up around them.

The designation included the area covered by Valley Gardens, then called Bogs Field, which contained thirty-six mineral springs. One of the strongest sulphur springs at the north-east end of Bogs Field became amongst the most popular and is shown beside a small cluster of buildings on a county map of 1771 marked 'Sulphur Spring'. The area around it was drained and improved in the early C19 eventually becoming the site of the Pump Room (present building 1842, listed grade II*), outside the registered area but an important element in the history of the site's development. Harrogate became enormously popular during the C19 when the waters were taken by leading politicians, aristocrats and members of the Royal family.

Bogs Field remained undeveloped until 1841 when a footpath was laid out at a cost of £5 and stone well-heads were introduced over the most important of the wells. The Royal Bath Hospital, on the north side of the site and outside the registered area, was opened in 1825 and this increased the numbers of visitors. A competition for the design of the park was held in 1887 but no winner emerged and the Corporation Surveyor drew up a scheme which incorporated features from a number of the competition designs.

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The Gardens continued to develop during the mid C20 and they became the site of the Harrogate Spring Flower Show for a considerable period in the mid and later C20, reflecting a move away from reliance on the supposed curative properties of the wells towards more recreational visitor attractions. The site remains in use as a public park (1998).

DESCRIPTION LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Valley Gardens are in Low Harrogate, on the north-west side of the town. The c 20ha site is on land which slopes down to the east and narrows to a valley at its north-east tip. It is in an urban and residential area on all sides but the west, where it acts as a link with open land on the west side of the town. The boundaries are formed by Valley Drive and Harlow Moor Drive on the south and south-east sides and Harlow Moor Road on the west side. Cornwall Road and the fenced precincts of the Royal Bath Hospital and adjacent reservoirs form the northern boundary. There is a mixture of walls and railings around the site, with substantial stretches on the south and west sides having no boundary between the pavement and the park.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance, at the north-east tip of the site, is at the junction of Valley Road and Cornwall Road, immediately opposite the Pump Room, where there is a set of stone gate piers flanked by stone walls. There is another entrance with gate piers on the south side of the site at the junction of Valley Drive and Harlow Moor Drive. Numerous informal entrances are disposed around the site.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The Sun Pavilion and Sun Colonnade stretch along east side of the northern edge of the gardens. The complex consists of the Pavilion, a top-lit function room, and attached to the east, the Sun Colonnade, which has two semicircular open pavilions linked by a covered walkway which terminates with a pedimented pavilion c 50m from the park's main entrance. The idea of forming a covered link between the Royal Bath Hospital and the Pump Room had been proposed in 1869 but financial constraints delayed the scheme which was not finally instituted until 1933. The structure is set into the slope and overlooks the eastern part of the gardens. It was restored and reopened to the public in 1998.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The main entrance leads to a path which splits into three with that to the north leading into the Sun Colonnade, and that to the south running along the east side of the site beside a stream. The middle path runs south-westwards as a lime avenue. Sloping lawns south of the Colonnade are laid out as rose gardens with shaped beds. Terraces lead down from the Sun Pavilion which overlooks a bandstand of the 1930s located c 200m to the south. The southernmost walk runs along the bottom of the valley beside the stream which runs over miniature cascades and forms small pools against a backcloth of rising slopes with rockwork which are planted with a variety of shrubs, including many evergreen varieties. The three paths converge at a point c 300m south of the Sun Pavilion where there is a concentration of natural springs. The springs are evident as a few cast-iron covers on concrete bases set into lawns around a central fountain encircled by paths. Most of the well-heads were destroyed and the wells sealed off in 1973. An early C20 former bandstand (listed grade II) which is in use as a cafe (1998) lies at the edge of this area c 400m south-east of the Pavilion.

The sloping grounds on the west side of the Pavilion are laid out with lawns and shrubberies within which the Magnesia Well Building (listed grade II) lies c 550m to the south-west beside a mound with a stone cap covering the well-head. The building, in Gothic Revival style with a steeply pitched roof and arched entrances, dates from c 1858.

The south-west part of the park is largely open land within which late C20 tennis courts and children's playgrounds occupy the central area immediately south of the Hospital. A bowling green enclosed by hedges with a thatched early C20 pavilion on the north side lies immediately west of the Hospital site. The land rises to the south-west in an area laid out as a miniature golf course in the 1970s. The slopes are well planted with a variety of specimen trees with pines and conifers predominating. The extreme west end of the park is wooded with a system of paths leading through a pinetum. The paths connect with informal entrances ranged along Harlow Moor Road and with paths extending into open woodland and fields (outside the registered area) on the west side of the road.

Part of the area occupied by the Valley Gardens is shown on views of 1772 by Moses Griffiths and 1830 by J Faley (after John Field) (postcards). These show the line of Cornwall Road and the north-east part of the site which is depicted as open fields divided from the site of the Pump Room by a road.

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REFERENCES E Deane, *Spadacrene Anglica* (1626) [quoted in archival typescripts] C Morris (ed), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1948) [quoted in archival typescripts] B Blakeson, *The Royal Pump Room Museum* (1993) Harrogate Conservation Area (Harrogate Borough Council 1996), pp 12-16

Maps T Jefferys, *County Map*, 1771

Archival items Typescript notes on the history of the town and Valley Gardens (Harrogate Borough Council) Harrogate Museums and Art Gallery Service produce a series of postcards taken from old illustrations of the town.

Description written: December 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.