

DERBYSHIRE

THE SLOPES

HIGH PEAK
BUXTON
SK0573

GD3131
II

Pleasure grounds probably laid out by Jeffrey Wyattville for the sixth Duke of Devonshire c 1818 which form the setting for The Crescent and attached buildings relating to the spa.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Buxton is the site of the shrine of St Ann, a popular place of pilgrimage in the medieval period. The shrine and associated mineral springs were closed after the Reformation but reopened to visitors taking the waters in 1572. The baths were improved in the late C17, and by the late C18 the town had become a popular focus for tourism with visitors attracted by the picturesque setting of the town as well as by the spa. Following improvements by the fifth Duke of Devonshire (see below), the sixth Duke continued to promote Buxton as a spa. Jeffrey Wyattville (1766–1840) was working for him at Chatsworth (qv) c 1818 and it was almost certainly he who was asked to carry out work to The Slopes. Some subsequent alterations were carried out by Joseph Paxton (1803–65) in the 1850s. In the C19 the seventh Duke of Devonshire sold the site on a chief rent to the Buxton Local Board (which subsequently became the Buxton Corporation). It remains (1998) in use as a public park.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The Slopes lie near the centre of Buxton. The c 3ha site is on land which slopes down to the north-west from Terrace Road, the east boundary. Hall Bank and the east end of The Square form the south-west boundary, while The Crescent and attached buildings (see below) form the north boundary.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

There are a number of informal entrances to the site from the roads encircling it.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The range of attached buildings fronting The Slopes comprises, from the west, Old Hall Hotel (C16 and later, listed grade II*), the Natural Baths (1851–3, partially rebuilt 1924, listed grade II), The Crescent (listed grade I), and the Thermal Bath (c 1853, listed grade II). The Old Hall Hotel is the former Buxton Hall, which was built by the Earl of Shrewsbury c 1570 to provide lodgings for visitors of rank who included Mary, Queen of Scots. The building has been remodelled and repaired at various times but retains its C16 core. The Crescent was designed by John Carr (1723–1807) for the fifth Duke of Devonshire in 1780 as the centrepiece of his plans to make Buxton a fashionable spa town like Bath. The building incorporated hotels, lodgings, and assembly rooms. The plan is semicircular, facing the original site of St Ann's Well which is now covered by a structure of c 1940 (listed grade II), with the Pump Room (1894, listed grade II) alongside it.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The land rises steeply to the south from the forecourt in front of The Crescent. This area was originally a bare hillside called St Ann's Cliff. The steeply sloping bank is grassed and

planted with scattered trees. Curved terraced paths are linked by paths which curve in the opposite direction, forming a pattern of interlocking ellipses. The pattern conforms broadly with that shown on the 1848 Tithe map. The paths run along and up the slope affording views of The Crescent below. The *Butterly Directory* of 1835 described the area thus: 'Over St Ann's Cliffs; opposite the Crescent, a fine rising lawn has been laid out with very great taste, where the company promenade'.

Twelve C18 stone urns, brought from another Devonshire property, Londesborough Hall (qv, demolished 1818–19) in East Yorkshire, are positioned on plinths along the terraced walks and linked by stretches of wall (walls, urns, and stone steps all listed grade II*). The lower terrace has a wall with four sets of steps and four urns set in shallow recesses. Above this the middle terrace has two urns flanking central steps and two more urns occupying shallow recesses at the termini of the wall. The top terrace has a pair of urns flanking central steps which lead up to a platform with a war memorial (1920, listed grade II) and another urn at each end of the wall.

The site was restored in 1994.

REFERENCES

Butterly Directory, (1835), p 25

N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: Derbyshire* (2nd edn 1978), pp 113–16

Archaeol J 148, (1991), pp 256–68

Pavilion Gardens, Buxton, (Dawson Taylor Landscape (DTL) 1996)

Maps

[all reproduced in DTL 1996]

Tithe map for Buxton parish, surveyed 1847, published 1848

W Robinson, *Map of Buxton Park as laid out by Joseph Paxton*, 1854

R R Duke, *Map of the Town of Buxton*, 1887 [published in revised form by J Buckley, 1889]

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1877, published 1879

OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition surveyed 1897, published 1898

Description written: October 1998

Amended: December 1999; May 2001

Register Inspector: CEH

Edited: May 2001