



Crescent Gardens Heritage Trail

a CHART Scarborough trail.

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Thanks to Scarborough Civic Society, the Friends of South Cliff Gardens, Andrew Clay and Scarborough Decorative and Fine Arts Society for providing much of the information contained in this trail.

This walk encompasses the former gardens of the four substantial Crescent houses on The Crescent, which are known collectively as Crescent Gardens.

Start the trail at...

the grassy terrace behind Woodend. [Grid Ref. F10] (now Woodend Creative Workspace), part of a former walled garden. Woodend was built in 1835 for a civil engineer called George Knowles and was purchased by the famous Sitwell family in 1870.

Before you enjoy the lush green vista of the valley in front of you, take a look behind at the impressive painted cast iron and glass conservatory that was built by Lady Louisa Sitwell shortly after 1870. Imagine the exotic plants, trees and creepers housed within, amongst which tropical birds flew freely. In front of you stands the 'folly' tower (reconstructed), which was probably built with the original house in 1835, but Lady Louisa had ovens installed so that it could be used as a pottery.

Look beyond the folly to that amazing feat of Victorian engineering – the Valley Bridge – a skeleton iron bridge that had fallen into the River Ouse at York and was bought by Robert Williamson in 1862 and re-erected in Scarborough. As your eyes pan across what is now Valley Gardens, consider the hive of activity that same year, as these gardens (known originally as the 'People's Park') were being laid out by the Town Corporation. This featured rockeries and a small pool which had formerly supplied water to cornmills that were demolished in the late 1850s.

Wander down to...

the Lily Pond [Grid Ref. F9] in the middle of which for over 100 years was one of the 100 incense burners filled by Perfumer Eugene Rimmel that lined London Bridge to disguise the pungent odour of the Thames on the evening of 10 March 1863, when Prince Edward, Prince of Wales – Queen Victoria's son and heir apparent – married Princess Alexandra of Denmark. Rimmel's perfumed oils were burnt in tripods, lasting for several hours, and wafted through the air to enhance the sense of occasion as people celebrated on the streets. Artist William Holman Hunt, describing them as 'tripod braziers', recorded them in his painting of London Bridge.

The burner had been bought by John Sharpin, lessee of the Crown Hotel and twice Mayor of Scarborough, who presented it to the town in 1873. The burner was removed from the pond in the mid 1980s where it was abandoned in the Council's storage area. It was tracked down by Scarborough Decorative and Fine Arts Society which also paid for its restoration. It is now located in Scarborough Museum Trust's store and is available for viewing on request.

Meander back up through the Woodend Gardens...

...to visit the neighbouring terraced garden belonging to Crescent House – now **Scarborough Art Gallery [Grid Ref. G10]**. Built in 1844/45 in an Italianate style, it is highly likely that the garden would have shared the formal Italianate features.

From here, look down and see if you can spot the unusual architectural feature located in the garden – the re-erected arch and wings of the long-lost Strawberry Gardens that used to be located in Falsgrave.

Continue along to garden area behind...

Londesborough Lodge [Grid Ref. G10], which were originally the most impressive and extensive gardens of all four Crescent houses. Begun in 1839 as Warwick Villa, Londesborough Lodge was bought by Lord Albert Denison Conygham (later 1st Lord Londesborough) in 1853. He and his son spent significant sums on the house and garden, to complement their lavish recreational lifestyle. As you wander around, you will come across what is believed to be a folly created by them – something akin to a hermit's cave, made from what appears to be reclaimed stone slabs (note the iron marks which recall sawn-off iron railings).

If you continue to walk along in the direction of the Cliff Bridge, past the fourth of the Crescent houses - the White House - you encounter...

a decorative **iron footbridge [Grid Ref. G11]**, spanning Vernon Road. Built between 1860-1870 by Lord Londesborough to give private access to the Spa, imagine the Prince of Wales and his entourage (who visited three times between 1869 and 1870) walking across the bridge to visit the Spa and getting the full 'red carpet' treatment – literally - as every time the Londesborough family and guests visited the Spa, nearly a mile of red carpet was laid out for the convoy.

Pause on the little footbridge to enjoy the Spa Cliff Bridge, in this case a feat of pre-Victorian engineering. Open to the public in 1827 and costing £9000, this bridge, which connects St Nicholas Cliff to the Spa, was built 414ft long and 13½ ft wide, whilst the height above water mark was 75 ft.

End of trail.