

DENBIGH: PIERCE MEMORIAL GARDEN

Ref No PGW (C) 66
OS Map 116
Grid Ref SJ 056 662
County Denbighshire
District Denbighshire

Community Council Denbigh

Designations Listed building: Pierce monument Grade II
Conservation Area (Denbigh)

Site Evaluation Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

An unusual small Victorian garden, surviving in its entirety, made as a setting to a memorial column

Type of Site

Formal memorial garden

Main Phases of Construction

1874-87

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Pierce Memorial Garden is a small formal Victorian garden situated on the south side of Vale Street in Denbigh. It is surrounded by buildings and bounded by stone walls on all but the north side, facing the street, where it is bounded by iron railings. The garden is dominated by its central feature, a tall stone column topped by a statue of a man. This commemorates Dr Evan Pierce, a local doctor. Subscriptions were raised locally for its erection, between 1872 and 1876, and Dr Pierce himself donated the ground. Beatrix Potter's diary entry for Tuesday 28 May 1895 mentions the garden: 'He presented a little slip of garden to the town, and set up an obelisk and his statue exactly opposite his front door. His name was Pearce, he died a few weeks since and lay in state in a scarlet hunting coat'. The Tuscan column, 72 ft high and made of limestone from the Graig Quarry, Denbigh, was designed by Martin Underwood. The statue, of Sicilian marble, is by W. & T. Wills. The column stands on a base of six stone steps leading up to a pedestal, with rectangular relief panels by M. Raggi set into three sides. The column was unveiled on 23 November 1876, and the panels were added in the 1880s. On the street side is an inscription detailing Dr Pierce's good works, positions et cetera, and giving the date of the foundation stone being laid (1874), and the work unveiled (1876).

The garden is laid out with gravel paths, a lawn, and two fountains, and is planted mainly with conifers. The paths are bordered by stone edging with sockets for iron railings, now gone. The garden is entered off the street through a central iron gate. A gravel path flanked by golden hollies leads to the column, which is surrounded by a

wide gravel path. Behind the column is an apsidal feature of waterworn limestone blocks, surrounded by Irish yews, inside which are the brick footings of a small rectangular feature, possibly a pavilion or alcove. Beyond is a rectangular lawn with gravel walk and perimeter beds around. Mixed conifers, now of considerable size, are planted around the edge of the garden. These include wellingtonia, pine, Irish yew. There are also some deciduous trees, notably sycamore.

On either side of the central path in front of the column are two cast iron fountains. They are set in grass and flanked on the south side by rows of golden cypresses, and were presented by Dr Pierce in 1887 to commemorate the queen's golden jubilee year. The central columns are the same, with circular bases on which the names of the queen's husband and children are inscribed, and two wavy-edged basins of vaguely leafy form. The basins in which they stand differ: the one to the east of the path has a cast iron circular basin in similar style on a brick base. That to the west has an octagonal basin of decorated yellow brick with a flat slate top. All cast iron parts are painted a pale turquoise blue. Hubbard reports that the fountains were formerly decorated with numerous birds.

Sources

Secondary

Evans, W.A., 'Dr Evan Pierce of Denbigh', Trans. Denbigh Hist. Soc. 15 (1966), pp. 158-68.

The Journal of Beatrix Potter from 1881 to 1897, transcribed by Leslie Linder (1966), p. 378.

Hubbard, E., Clwyd (1986), pp. 148-49.