

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MILL ROAD CEMETERY

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Name:	MILL ROAD CEMETERY
County:	Cambridgeshire
District:	Cambridge (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.202643 Longitude: 0.13699003 National Grid Reference: TL 46135 58198 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001561 Date first listed: 12-Dec-2001

Details

A city cemetery, established by the parochial clergy and opened by the Bishop of Ely in 1848, in response to the creation of a burial ground at Histon Road, Cambridge opened to Nonconformists in 1843.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The rapid growth of Cambridge in the early-C19 put the city's churchyards under severe pressure. Following calls for new burial grounds by the Cambridgeshire Chronicle in 1832, the Cambridge Cemetery Company, a private, non-profit-making body, opened the Histon Road Cemetery (qv) in 1843 for 'persons of all religious persuasions'. In response to this, the established church began to take action the following year and set up the Parish Burial Ground Committee (PBGC). This body was charged with the responsibility of raising funds by voluntary contributions to purchase a site for a burial ground. In 1847 c 3.5ha of land, used as the University cricket ground, were conveyed to the Church Building Commissioners, having been purchased from the estate of the Rev Dr Geldart (PBGC Minutes, 23 November 1847), for the use of thirteen parishes. Each of the parishes was allocated its own area within the cemetery and the boundaries were marked by small stones, some set into the boundary wall. A central area was set aside for the erection of a chapel when funds permitted. Once the land had been drained, boundary walls, gravel drives, railings, gates, and a lodge were laid out and the grounds were consecrated at the official opening by the Bishop of Ely on 7 November 1848. This event was reported in detail in the Cambridgeshire Chronicle the following day. By 1850 over 700 burials had taken place, and the committee noted that 'a very general and increased desire prevails that the erection of a chapel should no longer be deferred' (PBGC Minutes). The committee already had £400, so an appeal was launched to raise £600, making a total budget of £1000 for the building. The architect George Gilbert Scott (1811-78) was approached and asked to prepare a design for the chapel. His subsequent plans, dated 22 April 1851, show that his building would cost £1800 to erect, so amendments were requested. There followed protracted discussions and alterations, which went hand in hand with the fund-raising efforts and finally contracts were signed in 1856, following the gift of £250 from the Rev Professor Whewell, Master of Trinity College. Professor Whewell showed an interest in the design of the chapel and may have had a hand in asking for further alterations to Scott's plans (Proc Cambs Antiq Soc 1995). Problems with the interior meant that the chapel did not open until May 1858, ten years after the cemetery was established and in the intervening years, the lodge had been used as a

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mortuary chapel. Following the completion of the chapel the cemetery continued in use until some of the parish areas were filled and closed in 1904, with the remainder closing in 1949. In 1954 the chapel was demolished. In 1999 the Friends of Mill Road Cemetery were formed to raise awareness of the cemetery as a place of remembrance, and of historic and ecological interest. The site remains (2001) in the ownership of the Church of England, apart from the lodge which is privately owned. It is administered by trustees (the incumbents of the parishes) and is managed by the City Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Mill Road Cemetery lies in the south-east quarter of the city of Cambridge. The c 3.5ha site is bounded to the north, east, and south by the gardens of private houses, and to the west by the grounds of Anglia Polytechnic University. The ground is level and entirely enclosed by a low brick wall, with limited views into the site from the surrounding gardens and houses.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the cemetery is off Mill Road. A set of gates on the road leads onto a long drive running north-east, set between Mackenzie Road and the private gardens of houses in Emery Street. The drive, which is lined with pollarded limes and clipped evergreens, enters the main body of the cemetery ground beside the mid C19 knapped flint and stone Gothic-style lodge (listed grade II) that stands in the south-west corner. There are also small pedestrian entrances to the burial ground through gates in the eastern and northern boundary walls.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The principal building surviving on the site is the lodge in the south-west corner. For ten years following the opening of the burial ground the lodge was used as the mortuary chapel, custodian's accommodation, and committee room and it carries an inscription about the foundation of the cemetery. After 1858, a chapel was finally erected in the centre of the burial ground, to designs by the architect George Gilbert Scott, possibly with alterations by Professor Whewell (Proc Cambs Antiq Soc 1995) but this was demolished in the 1950s leaving the lodge once again the only building on the site. Extensive additions were made to the lodge in 2001/02.

OTHER LAND Mill Road burial ground was laid out as an ornamented cemetery by the Parish Burial Ground Committee, with four main paths dividing the land into quadrants, joined to serpentine perimeter walks, all of which survive. These wide cross walks converge on a circular central area where the Scott chapel stood. They are lined with Irish yews, with the most elaborate and early memorials (several of which are listed grade II) arranged along the north/south walk and around the chapel site. The planting around the serpentine paths and perimeter of the site has a more naturalistic feel, with mature trees including weeping beech, weeping ash, sycamore, and varieties of pines informally arranged. Amongst the mature trees are many young specimens planted in the 1970s. The divisions of the cemetery into thirteen different parish areas can be discerned by the marker stones which the PBGC erected.

The 1888 OS map shows that mixed beds of shrubs had been planted at the outer corners of the serpentine paths and the remains of some of these survive, although in some cases the plantings have been replaced. At the western end of the east/west axial path, close to the boundary wall, is a further collection of early memorials (1840s, several listed grade II) interspersed with evergreen shrubs.

REFERENCES

Cambridgeshire Chronicle, 17 February 1832; 10 October 1843; 8 November 1848 [copies held at Cambridgeshire Record Office] Proc Cambs Antiq Soc LXXXIV, (1995), pp 143-53 Mill Road Cemetery, Management Plan, (Cambridge City Council Landscape Design Group 1990s)

Maps OS 1:500 City map of Cambridge, published 1888 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1888 2nd edition published 1903 3rd edition published 1925

Archival items Cambridge Parish Burial Ground Committee Minutes (1884 onwards), (Cambridgeshire Record Office) Notes and information provided by the Friends of Mill Road Cemetery.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Mill Road Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * An early example (1848) of a garden cemetery. * The design combines a formal and informal layout of paths, which survives essentially intact. * Although the chapel has been demolished, its open site retains the original focal position.

Description written: October 2001 Amended: March 2002 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: December 2009

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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.