

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

CITY OF LONDON CEMETERY

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

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**CITY OF LONDON CEMETERY**

Name:	CITY OF LONDON CEMETERY
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Newham (London Borough)
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Redbridge (London Borough)
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.558918 Longitude: 0.050727990 National Grid Reference: TQ 42257 86441 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1000286 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

## Details

Mid C19 public cemetery designed by William Haywood and landscaped by William Davidson, from the grounds and farm of a C16 house.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Concern for the health of the residents of the City and the state of the churchyards led to the eventual purchase of 200 acres (c 83ha) of land from Lord Wellesley in 1853, to be laid out as a cemetery. The land included the C16 Aldersbrook House, which was part of the Wanstead Estate. John Rocque's Plan of London of 1762 (improved in 1766), shows the 'Alders Brook' estate, with house and formal gardens by the river, a lake to the west and radiating avenues to the south.

An area of 36ha was initially enclosed for the cemetery. Aldersbrook House was demolished and the lake was drained. The cemetery was laid out in 1853-5, with the buildings and overall design by William Haywood (1821-94), surveyor and engineer to the London Commissioners of Sewers. Haywood designed the Anglican chapel, the Dissenters' chapel, the catacombs, and entrance gates and lodges. The landscaping, for which £1800 was allocated, was carried out by the landscape gardener William Davidson (fl 1850s) of Bloomsbury Street, London and formerly a gardener at Shrublands, Suffolk.

Features from the earlier landscape (lake, avenues, drives) do not appear to have been incorporated or to have influenced the orientation and axial arrangement of the cemetery, except for the Catacomb Valley, which took advantage of the drained lake site, and a belt of trees between the lake site and the present main entrance. The unconsecrated ground in the cemetery was opened by the City of London Burial Board in June 1856, but the consecrated ground was not opened until November 1857, due to a problem over land claims. A proposed Catholic cemetery was never built. The cemetery was very successful and in 1858 there were 2681 burials.

Haywood laid out more roadways in 1859, and designed extensions in 1861-2, 1875 and 1887.

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In 1897 the London Commissioners of Sewers were abolished and the cemetery passed to the Corporation of the City of London, who still own and manage it. A crematorium was added in 1902, and the cemetery was further extended in 1906 (by the City Engineer F Skinner), 1914, 1949, and 1959.

Since 1937 25 acres (c 10ha) of memorial gardens have been laid out to the north and east of the old crematorium. Since 1951 a lawn burial policy has been adopted for coffin burial in the northern part of the site. There have been over 500,000 burials since the cemetery opened and it is now the largest municipal cemetery in Europe.

**DESCRIPTION**

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** City of London Cemetery, c 70ha, is located in the London Borough of Newham. It occupies a parallelogram of land between Wanstead Park and housing to the north, Wanstead Flats, Aldersbrook Road (A116) and Wanstead Park Avenue to the west, railway lines and Romford Road (A118) to the south, and the River Roding, Alders Brook, Ilford Golf Course and the North Circular Road (A406) to the east. The cemetery is bounded by fencing and hedges and is laid out on virtually level ground, except to the north-east, where it drops steeply to the river.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The cemetery is approached from the west, off Aldersbrook Road. The entrance screen, with gates and two attached lodges (listed together grade II) were designed by William Haywood in 1855. Built of rubblestone with ashlar dressings, the two-storey lodges have tiled roofs with fish-scale decoration. The entrance screen has three arches, with triple ogee canopied niches over. The screen with the piers and iron railings to either side forms a semicircular forecourt.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The following buildings were designed by William Haywood in 1855 in a spiky Gothic style: the Church of England (Anglican) Mortuary Chapel (listed grade II), 0.25km north of the entrance; the Non-Conformist (Dissenters') Mortuary Chapel (listed grade II), 0.3km north-east of the entrance; and the crescent-shaped Catacombs (listed grade II), now incorporating a columbarium, with staircases at either side, leading to a viewing platform over Catacomb Valley, 0.35km east of the entrance.

The Old Crematorium, 0.45km south-east of the entrance (now the South Chapel, listed grade II), was designed by D J Ross in 1902. It was the second crematorium in London, but since the present crematorium was built in 1973 has been used as a chapel of remembrance.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The western half of the cemetery, which was designed by Haywood, is laid out on a grand scale. Radiating from the main entrance are four carriage drives; the central two are straight and lead to the chapels, while those on either side are the serpentine drives (North Boundary Road and South Gate Road/South Boundary Road/South Drive) that circuited the original boundary of the cemetery. The avenue leading north-east to the Non-Conformist Chapel (Chapel Avenue), passes through a rondpoint. Leading from the rondpoint are six regularly spaced, straight avenues; two of which are aligned on the chapels, one on the entrance and one on the catacombs, which curve around one end of a formally planned oval sunken terrace (Catacomb Valley). This vista is now blocked by the present crematorium. The Catacomb Valley is planted with a formal arrangement of horse chestnuts, with holly and yew at the top of the flanking embankments and a semicircle of London plane at the rear. The rondpoint solved the awkward angle between the catacombs (orientated on the drained lake) and the rest of the site (orientated on the Aldersbrook Road entrance). A spine road (Central Avenue) leads south-east from the rondpoint between two circular drives (Stacey's Circle and the old crematorium circle), to which it is linked by a cross-road (St Dion's Road). At the northern end of St Dion's Road is the old crematorium, which marks the C19 east boundary.

Linking the formal drives, with their fine avenues of mature horse chestnut, are winding, subsidiary paths, also lined with trees (mostly lime, chestnut and London plane). The historic matrix of this part of the cemetery, as designed by Haywood with buildings, drives, associated tombs and planting, is intact. There are many fine trees in the cemetery; mature trees include plane, lime, oak, chestnut, copper beech and cedar of Lebanon. The tree belts around the perimeter of the cemetery include lime, laurel, sycamore, holly and hornbeam, with cypress along Aldersbrook Road and poplar around the C20 extension. At the southern end of the cemetery is a glade planted with lime, horse chestnut, sycamore and silver birch. Older trees and more diverse species survive in the centre of the Haywood design, around the rondpoint, entrance and Anglican chapel. Some of these may be survivors from the tree belt that was incorporated into Haywood's scheme from the Aldersbrook estate landscape. The trees here are mixed deciduous and evergreens and include cut-leaf beech, redwood, yew, Oriental plane, Italian cypress, sweet chestnut,

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deodar, strawberry tree, cedars of Lebanon, weeping silver lime, oak, ash, monkey puzzle and holm oak. Rhododendrons, laurel and holly are the main species in the underplanting and shrubbery belts.

To the south of St Dion's Road, the Central Avenue continues through Half-Moon Circle, to the South Boundary Road along the present south boundary. This ground was laid out by Haywood in the 1850s but not taken into the cemetery until 1861-2. As with the other areas designed by Haywood it consists of avenues along the drives, monuments, and scattered tree and shrub planting. To the east of this area and bordered on the east by Limes Avenue and on the west and south by South Drive and South Boundary Road respectively, is an area which contains the memorial gardens in the northern portion and lawn graves in the southern portion, divided by Willow Road. The memorial gardens were laid out from 1937 and include the Garden of Rest (constructed in 1937), a small round sunken garden, a raised round rock garden and a series of mid to late C20 memorials gardens, mostly of roses. Together the memorial gardens cover an area of c 10ha. The gardens are surrounded and divided by groups of flowering trees and shrubberies. To the east of Willow Road is a C20 extension, laid out with lawn graves, formally aligned and with little planting. This area and the area to the north, which is planted as a wood and known as The Birches, run along the present eastern boundary.

Limes Avenue returns to the west and then divides, with the continuation to the west (Garden Avenue) leading to the old crematorium, another drive (Gardens Way) leading south back through the memorial gardens, and Limes Avenue curving to the north, past The Birches and towards large areas of lawn graves in the north-east portion of the cemetery, laid out since 1949. From the old crematorium, South Drive turns into North Boundary Road, marking the eastern boundary of the site in the 1850s. It passes the catacombs and the Non-Conformist Chapel, and then leads past a lodge or cottage (listed grade II), designed in 1855 by William Haywood. This was formerly on the north-east edge of cemetery but due to the mid C20 expansion is now within the cemetery. The North Boundary circuits the north-west portion of the site and returns to the main entrance.

There are very large monuments marking the sites of the re-interments from the burial grounds of twenty-two City churches. The largest (listed grade II) was designed by Haywood and erected in 1871 over the lead coffins from St Andrew, Holborn and St Sepulchre. There are also communal graves for Christ's Hospital, Newgate Prison, various plague pits, the Royal Orphanage and the Hospital for Poor French Protestants. The mausoleum to William Haywood (listed grade II) was designed by himself and is situated on Chapel Avenue, to the north-east of the main gates. The Vigilant monument on Church Avenue is one of the more striking recent monuments.

#### REFERENCES

J S Curl, *A Celebration of Death* (1980), pp 293, 295-7 H Meller, *London Cemeteries* (1981), pp 105-11 E Harwood, *City of London Cemetery*, Newham (1988), (English Heritage London Division report to the Gardens Committee) C Brooks, *English Historic Cemeteries* (1994), p 58 (report commissioned by English Heritage Historic Parks and Gardens Register)

Maps John Rocque, *Plan of London on the same Scale as that of Paris ...1762 with new improvements 1766*

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1868 2nd edition published 1893-4 3rd edition published 1915

Archival items William Haywood's plans (Guildhall manuscripts)

**REASONS FOR DESIGNATION** City of London Cemetery is designated at Grade I for the following principal reasons:

\* This High Victorian cemetery (1853-55) was laid out to serve the Metropolis, particularly the City of London, and represents the apogee of public cemetery design. \* Renowned designers created an extensive and high quality layout, using formal and informal features. They included William Haywood who designed the layout and buildings, the landscape gardener William Davidson, and later Richard Sudell who designed the extensive Memorial Garden in the 1950s. \* The imposing and extensive cemetery buildings including lodges, gateways, chapels, catacombs (all 1850s) and the Old Crematorium (1902, an early example of its type) survive intact, as does the overall layout, and all are in good condition. \* A rich variety of national social, religious and artistic historical interest is expressed in an extensive and notable collection of monuments.

Description written: February 1998 Register Inspector: CB Edited: May 2000 Upgraded: November 2009

## Legal

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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.