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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

ABNEY PARK CEMETERY

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Name:	ABNEY PARK CEMETERY
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Hackney (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.564576 Longitude: -0.076810792 National Grid Reference: TQ 33400 86830 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000789 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

A public cemetery, opened 1840, laid out from the grounds of two C17 private houses by William Hosking and planted as an arboretum by Loddiges of Hackney.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The estate later known as the Fleetwood estate, was laid out in the 1630s from meadowland. Fleetwood House, which fronted Stoke Newington Church Street, was completed in 1635 for Sir Edward Hartopp, first Baronet. In addition to gardens and shrubberies around the House, there were 8 acres (3.3ha) of land to the north and a narrow extension extending eastwards to Stoke Newington High Street. The estate passed to the Fleetwood family in 1664 through the marriage of Mary Hartopp to Charles Fleetwood (1618-92), one of Cromwell's generals. The estate continued in the Fleetwood and Hartopp families until 1766, when it passed through a series of families, becoming a Quaker Girls' School by the 1820s.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748), the hymn-writer and divine, stayed at Fleetwood House in 1696 and was closely involved with the planning of Abney House, built for Thomas Gunston (1667-1700) on the adjoining land to the west of Fleetwood House. Although separate estates, the design of the Abney House gardens was linked to those of Fleetwood House through the Watts connection. Abney House was completed shortly after Gunston's death in 1700 and the property passed to his sister, wife of Sir Thomas Abney, Lord Mayor of London (1640-1722). Watts lived in Abney House from 1734 until his death in 1748. The Abney estate stayed in the Abney family until 1782, when it was sold to the Eade family, who owned the estate until the 1810s, after which it was divided up. J W Freshfield reunited much of the land and in 1827 he purchased the Fleetwood estate.

The 1830s programme to provide London with seven privately funded and developed cemeteries resulted in plans being drawn up for the joint Abney and Fleetwood estates in 1839 and 1840. The plans retained many of the C17 and C18 garden features, including the Great and Little Elm Walks, the Yew Walk and other planting. In 1840 the property passed to the Abney Park Cemetery Company and the cemetery was laid out to the design of William Hosking (1800-61), who also designed the chapel and the entrance gates and lodges. The cemetery was landscaped and planted by George Loddiges (1786-1846) of the nursery firm Loddiges of Hackney, and included every plant in their collection, then the largest named collection in the country. The result was an arboretum cemetery with over 2500 varieties, and a rosarium of over 3 acres (1.25ha) with 1029 varieties of

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rose. The complete list of plants, with a description of the cemetery and illustrations by G Childs, was published in George Collinson's *Cemetery Interment* (1840). The cemetery was praised by J C Loudon as 'the most highly ornamented cemetery in the neighbourhood of London' (*On the Laying Out, Planting and Managing of Cemeteries* 1843). Abney Park was London's main non-conformist cemetery throughout the C19.

Fleetwood House and Abney House were divided from the rest of the estate but the land on which Abney House stood was incorporated after the House was demolished in 1843; the additional land again being landscaped and planted by Loddiges.

The cemetery continued to be developed as more burials took place and the remoter parts were laid out with paths. In 1870 the New Road was laid out, connecting the entrance drive with the catacombs. No other substantial alterations were made to the drive and path network after this date. Fleetwood House, which lay immediately outside the south-east boundary of the cemetery, was demolished in 1872 and replaced by Fleetwood Street.

In 1979 the cemetery, in a derelict condition, was purchased by the London Borough of Hackney for a nominal sum. Since 1992, it has been managed as an historic landscape and managed wilderness by the Abney Park Cemetery Trust.

Abney Park is still a working cemetery but only a few burials are carried out each year.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Abney Park Cemetery, 13ha, is located within Stoke Newington, between Stoke Newington Church Street to the south, Stoke Newington High Street (A10) to the east, Manor Road (B105) to the north and Bouverie Road to the west. The cemetery is bounded by old brick walls, with some sections of new brick walls or wooden fencing, and backs onto the houses and gardens on the surrounding roads, except at the two entrances, where the boundaries adjoin the roads. The cemetery is laid out on level ground, with a very slight fall from north-east to south-west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are two entrances to the cemetery: the main (vehicular) entrance to the east and a pedestrian entrance to the south. The east entrance, from Stoke Newington High Street, is served by two 1840s lodges, designed with the entrance gates by William Hosking, in the Egyptian style (together listed grade II). The entrance to the south, from Stoke Newington Church Street, with wrought-iron gates and railings, flanked by curving brick walls (together listed grade II), was formerly the entrance to Abney House.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The non-denominational chapel (listed grade II), located in the centre of the cemetery, was designed by William Hosking in the 1840s in the Gothic style. It is built of stock brick on a Greek cross plan.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The irregular, picturesque layout of the cemetery has a strong axial plan within it, derived from the earlier, C17 formal garden. The roads and main paths largely run west/east or north/south but curve at the perimeter to follow the irregular boundaries of the cemetery.

The land in the cemetery has become woodland, with planting (much of it regeneration) and monuments taking up most of the space, the only clearings being at the entrances, along the drives and around the chapel. Individual planting and the effect of the remaining avenues have been lost due to the overgrowth (in 1998) but the structural layout remains largely intact. The present (1990s) management as a nature reserve is in marked contrast with the highly ornamental, Gardenesque style of the mid-C19 cemetery, where the only woodland planting was in the perimeter belts.

From the main entrance on Stoke Newington High Street, the approach to the cemetery is through a gate screen, with twin lodges, all in the Egyptian style (listed grade II). Immediately west of the entrance the drive has been paved in the late-C20 with setts, stone and brick and the grass verges have been planted (1990s) with a line of cypress trees, backed by a beech hedge. The drive then divides, with the perimeter drive (Road A/South Boundary Road) leading south-west, the New Road (laid out in 1870, to connect with Road F) leading west, and the main drive (Road I) leading slightly north-west. These drives, like those in the rest of the cemetery are all surfaced with gravel; the smaller paths are earth or concrete. The main drive leads to the gothic chapel (listed grade II), with its 120 foot spire a feature in the landscape. The chapel, which is derelict and has been vandalised, is located in the centre of the cemetery and is on the main north/south axis. On the same axis to the south is the small range of catacombs and the War Memorial, and to the south of this the heroic-sized statue of Isaac Watts by Edward Bailly (listed grade II), erected by public subscription in 1845. There are still good views between the Watts statue and the chapel. All these features are aligned on the axis that was centred on Abney House, and is still centred on the former entrance to Abney House,

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now the entrance to the cemetery from Stoke Newington Church Street. Parallel with this axis are drives to the west (Road G/ Great Elm Walk), and the east (Roads B & C/ Mount Road), both derived from lines of avenues in the pre-1840s gardens.

The South Boundary Drive connects the main, east entrance with the side entrance to the south. It leads past Yew Walk (formerly an avenue of yews from the pre-1840s landscape), along which there is a view to the Watts monument, and past Cedar Path, which circled a very large cedar of Lebanon (no longer extant), incorporated into the cemetery landscape. The cedar and a crescent-shaped pond to the north were both aligned on the centre of the garden front of Fleetwood House. Following the South Boundary Road on from Cedar Path, the drive passes the site of Abney House and leads to the Church Street entrance or circuits back north to the western part of the cemetery.

In the far north-east corner is a 1.5m high circular platform, surrounded with an old brick wall. It is known as Watts' Mound, where under a horse-chestnut tree (no longer extant) Watts sat and contemplated the gardens and fields outside. It is now surrounded by offices on Manor Road and houses on Listria Road but in the C18 and early C19 was almost circled by Hackney Brook and there were views from the mound over meadows to the north and east.

The rest of the cemetery has a uniform appearance, with views limited by the trees and dense overgrowth of ivy. Most of the monuments are small but there are good groups and individual monuments. Most of these have been cleared of ivy, including the twelve monuments which are individually listed (all grade II) and include the memorial to General William Booth (1829-1912), founder of the Salvation Army, and the monument to Agnes Forsyth by her father, the sculptor James Forsyth.

REFERENCES

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Maps Rocque J, Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster ..., 1744-6 Milne, Survey of London, surveyed 1795-9, published 1800 Cruchley, county map, 1828 Plan of the combined Abney and Fleetwood Estates, 1838 (Hackney Borough Council) Plan of Abney Park Cemetery, 1840 (published in Collinson 1840). Wyld J, New Plan of London, 1851 Stanford's Library Map of London and its Suburbs, 1862 Stanford's Library Map of London and its Suburbs, 1877

OS 25" to 1 mile 1st edition surveyed 1868 2nd edition published 1894 3rd edition published 1913

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Abney Park Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Abney Park Cemetery is a good example of an early Victorian (1840) garden cemetery. * The cemetery was in part laid out on the site of the late 17th century gardens of Fleetwood House and Abney House, which were both in part planned by the hymn-writer and divine Isaac Watts (1674-1748); features of these two gardens were retained in the cemetery design. * The cemetery has important structures designed by William Hosking (1800-61), in part with advice from the Egyptologist, Joseph Bonomi the younger (1796-1878). * The cemetery was planted by the leading C19 nursery, Loddiges of Hackney, with an extensive arboretum and rosarium of considerable horticultural interest. * The cemetery has strong connections with London's non-conformist community, which is expressed through its good collection of funerary monuments.

Description written: January 1998 Register Inspector: CB Edited: December 2009

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.