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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

GROVE PARK CEMETERY

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Name:	GROVE PARK CEMETERY
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Bromley (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Lewisham (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.425121 Longitude: 0.036432092 National Grid Reference: TQ 41680 71535 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001681 Date first listed: 07-Nov-2003

Details

An unusual, if not unique, example of 1930s municipal cemetery design combining formal and informal elements which show Moderne and Art Deco influences. The cemetery retains most of its original buildings and structures, together with much of its structural planting.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The parishes of Deptford and Lewisham had opened contiguous cemeteries in 1858 on land c 1km south-west of the centre of Lewisham. As new residential areas were developed in the parishes during the later-C19, these cemeteries, known today as Brockley Cemetery and Ladywell Cemetery, filled rapidly. By 1889 it was calculated that some 50,000 bodies had been interred in the two cemeteries (Inspector's Report 1999), while by the early-C20, despite extension, they were effectively full. In 1934 the Borough of Deptford acquired undeveloped land for a new cemetery at Grove Park in the south of the borough, adjacent to new, large residential estates built to re-house those moved from slums cleared elsewhere in the borough (Cherry and Pevsner 1994). The sloping site, bordered to the east by woodland, was laid out to an ambitious scheme by the Borough Surveyor, H Morley Lawson, incorporating formal elements including a monumental central drive and entrance, with more informal terraced garden areas partly conceived in 'moderne style' (ibid). The cemetery was provided with a lodge, office, chapel, toilets, a drinking fountain, and nursery and service yard reflecting Deptford's civic pride in the project. These features of the 1930s layout survive today (2003). The cemetery was opened by the Mayor of Deptford on 1 June 1935.

Initially, the ground on the summit of the hill and the upper south-facing slope were laid out for cemetery purposes. During the mid and late-C20, the level ground below the terraced garden has been appropriated for burials; these areas are not included in the registered site.

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Grove Park Cemetery remains (2003) in municipal ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Grove Park Cemetery is situated to the south-east of the Grove Park Estate in the London Borough of Lewisham, to the east of Marvels Lane. The c 6.5ha registered site is bounded to the west by brick walls which separate the cemetery from Marvels Lane, while to the north the site is separated from domestic properties on the south side of Charminster Road by C20 metal fences. To the east similar fences enclose the site from Marvels Wood and Elmstead Wood. The southern boundary of the registered site is formed by a slightly curving tarmac walk which extends across the site from east to west, separating the early-C20 burial areas and terraced gardens from mid and late-C20 burial areas to the south which are excluded from the registered site.

The cemetery occupies a level plateau of high ground which falls away to the south allowing views across the railway line to Sundridge Park (qv) and golf course beyond.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Grove Park Cemetery is entered from Marvels Lane to the west, at a point adjacent to the junction of that road and Riddons Road. The entrance comprises a pair of 1930s wrought-iron carriage gates supported by a pair of tall, rusticated brick piers under square caps. To each side of the carriage entrance a matching single pedestrian gate is supported by matching brick piers. The entrance is flanked by low brick and stone quadrant walls which support 1930s wrought-iron railings. The railings terminate in brick piers matching those supporting the entrance gates, which in turn terminate the western boundary wall fronting Marvels Lane. To the south-east of the entrance a two-storey brick and tile-roofed lodge (altered mid and late-C20) stands in an area of lawns, while in a symmetrical position to the north-east there is a single-storey office with a verandah on the south-west and west facades supported by simple concrete columns. The lodge and office form part of the original scheme for the cemetery.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The cemetery chapel stands c 100m east-south-east of the entrance, to the north of the principal drive extending from west-north-west to east-south-east through the cemetery. It is a simple rustic or Vernacular-style building of timber construction under a tiled roof with dark-painted ornamental timbers set against the pale-painted external walls. The chapel is lit by narrow Gothic-style lancet windows set in groups of three within rectangular openings. A gabled porch on the west facade is approached from the drive to the south by stone steps, while a flat-roofed porch adjacent to the south-east corner of the building on a level with the drive was presumably intended for the use of officiating clergy and the bier. The chapel dates from the formation of the cemetery in 1935, although its prefabricated construction suggests that it may have been intended to construct a more elaborate place of worship more in keeping with the scale and quality of the 1930s scheme when funds permitted.

OTHER LAND From the entrance to the cemetery, a broad tarmac drive extends c 150m east-south-east to reach a rondpoint comprising a large circular lawn planted with a centrally placed group of mature ornamental standard *Malus*. The drive is flanked to north-east and south-west by wide grass verges, that to the north-east supporting a series of geometrical beds for seasonal planting. Each verge is backed by mature specimen trees and mixed shrubbery which serve to screen burial areas to the north-east and the nursery to the south-west. The verges continue around the outer side of the rondpoint, with the screening shrubbery being replaced by low privet hedges and further specimen trees. To the north-east of the rondpoint, an Art Deco-style stone drinking fountain stands on a wide, stepped circular stone-flagged base. The fountain bears carved inscriptions commemorating the opening of the cemetery by the Mayor of Deptford, Cllr J E Pearson JP, on 1 June 1935, its design by the Borough Surveyor, H Morley Lawson, and the membership of the Cemetery Committee, 1934-5. The design of the drive and rondpoint, and the associated planting, provide a monumental axial vista extending from the cemetery entrance to the heart of the site. Graves are excluded from this vista, although some late-C20 burials have begun to intrude on the eastern end of the south-west verge. The rondpoint serves as the focal point of the cemetery scheme, with further drives and walks leading from it to provide access to burial areas.

A narrower tarmac drive leads east-south-east from the central rondpoint, extending the axis of the principal drive, to reach a further, smaller rondpoint planted with a mature specimen weeping willow. This drive is adjoined to north-east and south-west by narrow grass verges and burial areas which are laid to grass and planted with specimen trees and conifers. A group of

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Second World War Commonwealth War Graves are situated to the south-west of this drive, while c 15m east of the smaller rondpoint, a Portland stone exedra standing on a stepped base commemorates those civilians killed in Deptford during the Second World War who are buried in mass graves to the west of the monument. The axial south-east drive continues c 100m beyond the smaller rondpoint to join a walk extending parallel to the eastern boundary of the cemetery.

From both the central rondpoint, and the smaller rondpoint to the south-east, drives lead north-east to give access to burial areas which are laid out to a grid pattern on level ground. The intersection of paths dividing the burial areas are marked by specimen trees, while there is a further rondpoint at the intersection of wider drives leading south-east and north-east through the north-east quarter of the cemetery. A boundary walk extends parallel to the eastern and northern boundaries of the cemetery, with two further rondpoints marking the junction of the northern boundary walk with the drive leading north-east from the central rondpoint and a drive leading north-east from the principal drive at a point immediately west of the chapel. The northern boundary walk is bordered to the north by evergreen shrubbery and specimen trees, while the north-west quarter of the cemetery is relatively densely planted with trees and conifers. A drive extending north-east from the principal drive at a point c 25m east of the cemetery entrance provides access to the early-C20 toilet block, constructed in Vernacular style under a hipped tiled roof, and, at the north-west corner of the cemetery, the service yard with 1930s sheds and brick-built bothies.

A wide tarmac walk leads south from the central rondpoint to a wide, slightly concave flight of stone steps. The steps are bordered by rusticated stone retaining walls with flat stone coping which terminate in scrolled-back piers. The steps descend to a wide tarmac walk which sweeps west and north-west to gain access to further burial areas, and east and north-east to reach an area of ornamental garden. To the south-west and south-east of the stone steps, further flights of narrower, but similar stone steps descend to a stone-flagged circular terrace. To the north this terrace is backed by a retaining wall constructed in painted concrete with stone coping, the reeded effect of the wall surface having been achieved by using corrugated iron shuttering in construction. The centre of the terrace is taken up by a circular feature comprising, to the north a narrow stone-edged bed terminating to south-west and south-east in circular, drum-like beds constructed in concrete with stone coping, and to the south a large, approximately circular planting bed. This bed was originally designed as a pool. Curvilinear walks lead west and east from the south side of the pool terrace, with further, similar flights of stone steps descending c 20m west and c 40m east to reach a broad tarmac drive, lined with an avenue of flowering trees, which extends along the lower edge of the south-facing slope on which the gardens are disposed, and which forms the southern boundary of the registered site.

To the east of the pool terrace the serpentine walk extends c 150m through an area of trees and predominantly evergreen shrubs planted on the south-facing slope, to reach a recess to the north of the walk. Edged in rockwork, the recess contains a central, slightly raised informally shaped border, also edged with rockwork, which was formerly a further ornamental pool. The walk continues east beyond the recess to reach a further flight of stone steps which descends south-west to the formal walk at the bottom of the slope. Beyond the steps the walk sweeps north and north-west, ascending to the slope to reach an area of level ground which is laid out as a formal garden. As the walk sweeps westwards, it passes a seating recess, edged with low stone walls which terminate either side of the entrance in scrolled-back piers matching those on the steps descending to the pool terrace from the central rondpoint. The seating recess is paved with random stone and contains a curved timber bench seat. The recess is placed at the eastern end of the east to west axis of the formal garden, from which it is separated by an area of lawn and a group of specimen conifers. The formal garden comprises a rectangular lawn enclosed by a stone-flagged walk. The lawn contains a group of geometrically shaped rose beds, while to the west it is adjoined by circular stone-flagged area which surrounds a low, stone-walled circular bed which formerly contained a fountain. A walk and flight of stone steps lead south-west from the fountain to reach the lower walk, while a further stone-flagged walk leads west from the fountain through an area of lawn bordered to the south by trees and shrubbery and to the north by a group of specimen conifers which serve to screen the group of Commonwealth War Graves Commission monuments south-east of the central rondpoint. This walk is terminated to the west by the remains of a shelter. This structure, demolished c 2001, was Art Deco in design and comprised stone wing walls and piers with a brick-lined seating recess, beneath a flat roof which extended the full width of the wing walls (photograph, 2000). Beyond the site of the shelter, the walk sweeps south-west to pass above the pool terrace and below the

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steps descending from the central rondpoint before continuing north-west and west to join a drive which leads north to join the principal drive opposite the chapel.

The formal and informal gardens on the south-facing slope to the south-east of the central rondpoint are an original feature of Lawson's scheme, providing a contrast to the grandeur of the formal axis leading from the entrance as well as the opportunity for southerly views across Sundridge Park.

A drive to the east of the lodge, c 20m south-east of the entrance, leads through the belt of trees and shrubbery bordering the south-west side of the principal drive to reach the site of the cemetery nursery. Established as part of the original scheme for the cemetery and formerly provided with several glasshouses, this is no longer in use (2003).

REFERENCES

Mellor H, London Cemeteries (3rd edn 1994), 138 Cherry B and Pevsner N, The Buildings of England: London 2 South (revised edn 1994), 417 Inspector's Report: Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, Lewisham, (English Heritage 1999)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1914

Archival items Photographs of Grove Park Cemetery, June 2000 (English Heritage)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Grove Park Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Grove Park Cemetery is a highly unusual, if not unique, early C20 cemetery (1935) laid out for a London Burial Board to a design showing Moderne and Art Deco influences. * The cemetery and its associated structures were designed by the Deptford Borough Surveyor, H Morley Lawson. * The design of the cemetery combines formal and informal elements, the latter including garden areas with ponds, seating and raised flower beds. * The design of the cemetery skilfully exploits its location on a ridge of high ground overlooking Sundridge Park (qv). * The original structures associated with the cemetery were executed to a particularly high standard, reflecting civic pride in the undertaking; the timber, prefabricated chapel (1935) was probably intended to be replaced when funds permitted. * The layout of the cemetery, including its associated structures and much original planting survives essentially intact. * The cemetery contains a memorial commemorating civilians killed in Deptford during the Second World War, and who are buried in mass graves within the cemetery; it also contains a group of Second World War Commonwealth War graves.

Description written: July 2003 Register Inspector: JML 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.