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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

HUNSLET CEMETERY

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Name:	HUNSLET CEMETERY
District:	Leeds (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.768469 Longitude: -1.5217977 National Grid Reference: SE 31618 30342 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001678 Date first listed: 20-Oct-2003

Details

Woodhouse Hill or Hunslet Cemetery opened in 1845, one of the earliest publicly funded cemeteries in England. The buildings were designed by the Leeds architects, Robert D Chantrell and Thomas Shaw.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1842 the Leeds Burial Act allowed Leeds Corporation to levy rates for the interment of the dead, a pioneering venture in England at this time (Burt & Grady 1994). Disposal of the dead had become an urgent issue as the population of Leeds almost trebled in the first half of the C19. Two new cemeteries were to be provided in the most rapidly expanding areas: Burmantofts or Beckett Street Cemetery (qv), for the township of Leeds, and Woodhouse Hill Cemetery, for the township of Hunslet (White 1857-8). The latter township was rapidly becoming densely built up with mills, factories, gasworks and brickyards, all surrounded by back to back housing. South Leeds and Hunslet were then important centres for the production of traction engines, steamrollers and steam wagons (Burt & Grady 1994). By the end of the C19 the cemetery was known as Hunslet Cemetery.

In April 1844 Robert D Chantrell (1793-1872) and Thomas Shaw, local architects (Linstrum 1978), were commissioned to design the walls and buildings for Hunslet Cemetery: two lodges and a large building incorporating two mortuary chapels, a Nonconformist chapel to the north and an Anglican chapel to the south (Barnard Notes 2003). Woodhouse Hill Cemetery (as originally named) opened on 19th June 1845, with roughly ten acres of ground provided at a cost of about £6000 (White 1894). The Cemetery was extended first on the west side of Middleton Road in 1918, with one further extension, south of the original site, opened in 1959. The chapel building is still in use and the north lodge remains in the ownership of the Council, leased to the adjacent stonemason. The south lodge, currently undergoing renovation, has been sold to a private owner. The Cemetery remains (2003) under the ownership and management of Leeds City Council

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Hunslet Cemetery is situated c 3.7km south-east of Leeds city centre on land rising gently to the west and north. The early Victorian section of the Cemetery comprises a c 4ha rectangular site, on the edge of a residential area, with open land to the east. The western boundary along Middleton Road is formed by high stone walls (mid-C19, listed grade II), c 3.5m in height near the main entrance, located at the centre of the boundary, gradually reducing to c 1.8m to the northern and southern extremities. A metal security fence (C20), bounding a stonemason's yard, forms

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part of the western boundary in its northern section. On the west side of Middleton Road, opposite the early Victorian section of the cemetery, is the first extension of the cemetery (outside the area here registered). The southern boundary of the cemetery here registered is formed by a level high stone wall ranging in height from c 1.8m to c 3.5m following the fall of ground levels from west to east. Along much of its length this wall forms a retaining wall, substantial towards the eastern half, separating the higher level of the grounds of the early Victorian section of the cemetery from the second extension of the cemetery (outside the area here registered) to the south, some 2.4m below. The east boundary is formed by a stone wall, partly retaining, beyond which, to the east, lies rough open ground extending towards the M621 motorway and slip roads. A stone wall of variable height forms the northern boundary, beyond which lies back to back housing (early-C20) aligned at right angles to the boundary walls and, to the west, the buildings and grounds of Scott's Almshouses (John E Leak 1986 listed grade II).

There are good views to the north-east, east and south-east from the eastern end of the cemetery, although, from some parts, mature tree growth now (2003) partially obscures views to the east, south-east and south.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance, approached from Middleton Road and situated close to the centre of the western boundary, consists of a central carriage entrance with a pair of wrought iron gates and stone gate piers (mid-C19) and pedestrian entrances to either side with single wrought iron gates and stone gate piers (mid-C19). Beyond the pedestrian entrances, short concave stone walls terminate in stone piers (mid-C19) at the corner of each of two lodges, in Tudor style, immediately to the north and south. The west wall of each lodge forms part of the western boundary (gate piers, gates, walls and two lodges, mid-C19, listed grade II). A pedestrian entrance (mid-C20) is located at the western end of the south boundary, 75m south-south-east of the main entrance.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS A cobbled carriageway leads through the entrance gates to the cemetery chapels (Robert D Chantrell & Thomas Shaw, mid C19, listed grade II), situated 20m east-south-east of the entrance. The route is framed to either side by the tall gables of the cemetery lodges. The chapels form a single building occupying a central position beyond an area of grass. Directly opposite the cemetery gateway and set centrally on the west wall of the chapels is a memorial stone to Charles Grosvenor of Hunslet (1867, listed grade II). Some 10m west of the chapels the carriageway divides, one route leading to a forecourt north of the main entrance to the Nonconformist chapel in the north side of the building, the other route leading to a forecourt south of the main entrance to the former Anglican chapel in the southern half. Both routes connect around the east side of the chapels, with paired entrances to each chapel at the centre of the east wall. From this central and slightly elevated position there are good views across the cemetery grounds.

OTHER LAND The layout of the cemetery is simple and symmetrical. Two parallel tree-lined paths leading from west to east are symmetrically arranged parallel to a central path aligned on the chapels. All three routes are linked by a path leading north to south at the east end of the cemetery.

A fine group of monuments of various styles and stature are prominent 10m north-north-east of the north chapel forecourt, in an area of grass and mature evergreen plantings. The path giving access to this area is still evident but largely overgrown. The boundary wall (C20) of the stonemason's yard, situated in the north-west corner of the cemetery, is visible immediately to the west. From the north chapel forecourt the main path curves downhill to the north-east and continues as a straight path, tree-lined and slightly sunken below the surrounding ground levels, leading east. On the south side of the path, the central area of the cemetery is occupied by dense groupings of headstones and monuments at the western end, with large groups of 'inscription' or 'guinea' graves further east. These graves allowed those who could afford the guinea to be buried in a shared marked grave (Beckett Street Cemetery Trail 1986). A fine specimen of weeping ash stands some 60m east of the cemetery chapels. Several headstones and monuments have been damaged, either through ground instability or vandalism, and there is much rough growth of weeds and tree seedlings.

On the north side of the main path there is a gradual transition from west to east from a predominance of monuments and headstones, densely grouped, to more sparse groupings of 'guinea' graves and single headstones. The eastern end of the cemetery, where the ground is open grass and the landform rises, may have been an area used for pauper burial and for the deposition of excess excavated material. Towards the north-east corner of the cemetery, the main path takes a sharp turn to lead south, with

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open views to the north-east, east and south-east. Some 190m east of the chapels a central path, slightly below the surrounding ground levels, leads west back towards the chapel building.

The main path, below the surrounding levels, continues to the south-east corner of the cemetery and takes a sharp turn to lead west. From here there are open views to the east and south-east. The difference in ground level between the much higher early Victorian section of the cemetery and that of the second extension (outside the area here registered) to the south, is substantial and most obvious at this point. As the main path proceeds west, tree-lined, there is a transition from open grass, through groups of 'guinea' graves towards a predominance of monuments and elaborate headstones at the western end. Some 130m south-east of the cemetery chapels stands the memorial to a number of workers who lost their lives in the collapse of a cut nail works at Hunslet on 1st July 1885 -1885, listed grade II), erected by voluntary subscription in various cut nail works at Leeds, Staleybridge and Glasgow.

To the south and south-west of the chapel buildings is a greater predominance of monuments and elaborate headstones. Some 25m south of the Anglican chapel a path leads south to give access to the second extension of the cemetery (outside the area here registered). The main path ascends to the south chapel forecourt and continues to the north-west, passing the south lodge, to return to the main entrance.

REFERENCES

White W, Directory and Topography of the Borough of Leeds (1857-8) 33 White W, Directory of Leeds (1894), 625 Linstrum D, West Yorkshire Architects (1978), 373-4, 384 Beckett Street Cemetery Trail, guide leaflet, (Leeds City Council, Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery and Leeds Civic Trust 1986) Burt S & Grady K, The Illustrated History of Leeds (1994)

Maps OS 6' to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1846-7, published 1852 OS 25' to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1905, published 1908 OS 10' to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1890, published 1891

Archival items Sylvia Barnard, MS research notes, 2003 [copy on EH file] Richard Taylor, MS research notes, 2003 (Department of Planning & Environment, Leeds City Council)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Hunslet Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * One of the earliest (1844-45) publicly-funded cemeteries in England forming one of a group of cemeteries laid out by Leeds Corporation at the same time (qv Beckett St). * An early example of the grid pattern layout adopted by many later cemeteries, reflecting Loudon's ideas. * Local social interest expressed in burials including pauper graves (largely unmarked), 'guinea graves' with their headstones, each inscribed with the names of many unrelated occupants of the grave, reflecting an unusual aspect of social history, and Leeds worthies, reflected in many monuments of high quality, also a memorial to a number of workers who lost their lives in the collapse of a cut nail works in 1885, erected by voluntary subscription in various cut nail works at Leeds, Staleybridge and Glasgow. * The layout and structures survive intact with elements including boundary wall, lodges and gateways, path system, monuments.

Description written: April 2003 Revised: June 2003 Register Inspector: JS 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.