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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

TONGE CEMETERY

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

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Name: TONGE CEMETERY

District: Bolton (Metropolitan Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 53.576998
Longitude: -2.4084853
National Grid Reference: SD 73050 09011
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001660
Date first listed: 20-Nov-2002

Details

A public cemetery opened in 1856, laid out by William Henderson and with extant buildings by Charles Holt and John Smalman Smith.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1854 Bolton Corporation was reported as reluctant to become encumbered with the responsibilities of providing and maintaining a public cemetery and action was only taken following receipt, in April 1855, of an Order of Her Majesty in Council vesting the Borough of Bolton with the powers for providing places for burials with a request that the Order be laid before the Town Council (Kelly 1988). A Burial Board was subsequently appointed at a special council meeting later in the same month (ibid).

Some 29 acres (c 12ha) of land at Tonge were purchased for a cemetery from Le Gendre Nicholas Starkie for £8067 (Bolton Almanack, 1856). Starkie also gave a 16 yard (c 14.4m) wide strip of land for an approach road from Tonge Bridge and £300 towards ornamenting the ground (ibid). A competition was held for designs for mortuary chapels and in June 1856 designs by Bolton architect, Charles Holt were selected for the Church of England and Roman Catholic chapels and Robert Burrows was appointed to construct the two for £1222 (The Builder, 1856). Two other Bolton architects were also involved: George Woodhouse for the design of the Nonconformist chapel, costing £570, and John Smalman Smith for the design of the lodges, entrance, and fence forming the northern boundary (Bolton Almanack, 1856). The lodges and entrance gates cost £860, drainage £500, fencing £2000, and laying out the ground £1500 (ibid). Draining, fencing, and road-making was carried out by the Borough Engineer, Baylis, and the laying out, planting, and ornamentation by Henderson of Birkenhead (ibid). William Henderson was responsible for designs for Corporation Park (qv) in Blackburn (1857), Alexandra Park (qv) in Oldham (1865), Queen's Park (qv) in Bolton (1866) and, in part, Farnworth Park (qv) in Bolton (1864). The cemetery opened on 31 December 1856 with the first burial of Thomas Allan of Little Bolton, aged seventy, although at that time the entrance buildings, approach road, and road to the Roman Catholic chapel were not complete (Registrar's Report, 6 January 1857).

The 1893 OS map indicates that the irregular site was divided from east to west at the centre by a steep embankment with burial grounds laid out in the northern section, around the Nonconformist and Church of England chapels, but with only a perimeter path and small area adjacent to the Roman Catholic chapel laid out in the southern section. In 1894 the Church of England chapel was damaged by the removal of coal from the Bancroft Mine lying below the cemetery (Kelly 1988). Damage to other

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buildings was anticipated and, rather than purchase the sections of coal supporting them for £3986 4s 7d, it was decided that the buildings should be tied without delay (ibid). By 1908 (OS 1910) the central area of the site had been laid out, with the steep, dividing embankment appearing to have been re-levelled, and the cemetery boundary extended to include additional ground, then partially laid out, to the east.

The Nonconformist and Roman Catholic chapels no longer (2002) remain. Tonge Cemetery remains (2002) in use and is in the ownership of Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, excepting only the west entrance lodge which is in private ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The irregular, c 15ha site is situated c 1.3km east of Bolton town centre. To the west and south-west the cemetery adjoins the steeply sloping wooded bank of the River Tonge with the boundary generally unmarked. To the east the cemetery adjoins the wooded edge of Leverhulme Park, a public park gifted to the town by Viscount Leverhulme in the early-C20. From the southern tip of the cemetery this boundary is marked for c 170m to the north by a c 1.6m high buttressed stone wall and elsewhere generally by C20 concrete panel fencing. The line of the stone wall accords with the boundary shown on the 1893 OS map and the C20 fencing with the boundary of the extension land indicated on the OS map of 1910. The north boundary, adjoining early and late-C20 housing on Cemetery Road and Tonge Fold Road respectively, is marked by a low stone wall with evidence of railings, now (2002) removed. In the north-west corner of the cemetery, where the ground falls towards the river, the north boundary wall is stepped to follow the ground line with junctions between differing wall heights marked by wide piers with swan-neck detailing. To the east of the entrance on the north boundary the ground rises, with the boundary wall stepped to follow the slope. At the north-east corner of the site an area of allotment gardens, on rising ground, is inset into the cemetery with the boundary marked by a low stone retaining wall. The north boundary is generally lined with trees and these, together with the wooded belts adjoining the river and in the adjacent public park, create a strong, enclosing boundary line.

The north-west area of the cemetery occupies a generally level plateau. Along the southern edge of the plateau the ground slopes down to the south and south-west, the lower ground in the southern area of the cemetery being gently undulating. To the east of the plateau, ground in the north-east of the cemetery slopes steadily up towards the east boundary with a disused mine shaft adjacent to the far north-east corner of the site. To the north and north-east the surrounding area is in mixed housing and commercial use, with Leverhulme Park to the east and across the river to the south-west, the C19 Bradford Park developed with C20 housing.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal, and only, entrance lies at the centre of the main northern boundary and is approached via Cemetery Road, which leads southwards from Bury Road. It is marked by a carriage entrance with cast-iron gates set between large octagonal stone piers with projecting splayed caps. The carriage entrance is flanked by two iron pedestrian gates set within low stone walls, topped with railings and terminating at stone piers with ball finials. These outer piers are each attached to lodges situated immediately to the west and east of the entrance. The entrance ironwork is all of similar design and by Pickersley Sims & Co, Bedford Foundry, Leigh. Fixing details appear altered however suggesting that earlier gates and railings have been replaced. The lodges, generally two storey with single-storey canted projections adjoining the entrance, are largely symmetrical in design with walls of coursed stone rubble with ashlar dressings and window-head detailing below steep roofs of blue slate with gable parapets. Cast-iron wall-plates indicate internal tie rods. The lodges and entrance date from 1856-7 and are by John Smalman Smith.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS The Church of England mortuary chapel is sited 130m south-east of the entrance on the east side of the north-west plateau area. The single-storey stone chapel, in a simple Gothic Revival style, is in coursed stone rubble with ashlar dressings below a blue fish-scale slate roof with a short pinnacled bell turret above the recessed main west door. Cast-iron wall-plates indicate internal tie rods. The chapel dates from 1856 and is by Charles Holt.

OTHER LAND From the entrance a 5m wide axial main drive leads 180m south-south-east to the southern edge of the plateau area in the north-west of the cemetery. Immediately adjacent to the entrance two drives lead off to east and west to form a winding circuit largely following the boundaries to north and west, and to the southern tip of the cemetery. To the east the

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circuit drive winds from north to south through the cemetery and generally marks the boundary between the mid-C19 cemetery and later extension ground.

Some 30m south of the entrance a further pair of drives lead off to east and west of the axial drive, each following a semicircular route leading back to the axial drive c 165m to the south of the entrance. These drives thus form an inner, 135m diameter formal circuit adjoining which, to east and west respectively in a cross-axial arrangement, are the Church of England chapel and the site of the former Nonconformist chapel, the latter marked by an open grassed area. Burial areas in the north-west plateau area of the cemetery are laid out with grassed axial and occasional cross-axial paths with those in the north-west corner on a north/south axis.

To the south of the formal circuit drive, c 175m south of the entrance, two cross-axial drives lead off the main drive which, from this point, continues as a 3m wide path leading down for c 100m where it meets the winding circuit path adjacent to the south-west river boundary. The cross-axial paths also intersect with the winding circuit path, one leading directly eastwards before curving down to the east-south-east and the other leading down, directly westwards. Immediately south-east of this junction is a small Quaker burial ground. These cross-axial paths are indicated on the 1893 OS map as lying at the head of a steep embankment with lower ground to the south. Some 35m south of the cross-axial drives, two further curving paths lead off the main axial path to link with the winding circuit path to west and east. This layout is first indicated on the OS map of 1910.

In the lower, southern area of the cemetery, c 330m south-east of the entrance and within the winding circuit drive, is the site of the former Roman Catholic chapel, marked by an open grassed area. From the chapel site a winding path leads north-west and another south-east, both to rejoin the winding circuit drive. Burial areas adjacent to this chapel site are laid out with grassed paths on a north-north-west to south-south-east axis and include, to the south-east of the chapel site, a small rectangular burial ground for nuns enclosed by low C19 railings. Elsewhere the southern burial ground is generally laid out with an extension of the axial arrangement of grassed paths in the north-west of the cemetery.

The eastern area of the cemetery, rising steeply to the north-east, is generally laid out with straight paths leading eastwards, slightly off the cross-axis, from the winding circuit path to a path running north-west to south-east. This path bisects the north-east area of the cemetery, a large part of which remains unused for burials.

The cemetery contains a number of mature trees, in particular along main drives where their location and occasional siting on small mounds may indicate former more extensive formal tree planting. The main axial drive is lined with mature yews for c 15m to north and south of the cross-axis linking the two chapel sites and, adjacent to the entrance, the ground between the two main drive junctions with the axial drive is marked by two rectangular areas densely planted with evergreens.

Among the many varied memorials to prominent C19 and C20 Bolton people are those to the radical reformer, Thomas Yates (d 1857) and composer, John Francet (d 1867) (Brooks 1989). Particularly impressive groups of monuments, some enclosed with railings and many marking vaults below, line the main axial drive. Other notable groups are situated immediately south-east of the Nonconformist chapel site and facing the west front of the Church of England chapel.

REFERENCES

The Builder 14, no 697 (14 June 1856), 334 Bolton Almanack and Year Book for 1857 (1856), 49-50 L Kelly, Disposal of the Dead in 19th century Bolton (unpublished MA thesis, Manchester Polytechnic 1988), 101-10 C Brooks, Mortal Remains (1989), 52, 125

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1850 1938 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1893 2nd edition revised 1908, published 1910 1930 edition 1939 edition

Archival items Tonge Cemetery Registrar's Report, 1857 (ABZ/3/4), (Bolton Local Studies Library)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Tonge Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Tonge Cemetery is a High Victorian cemetery (1856) laid out for a Burial Board. * The cemetery was laid out by William Henderson of Birkenhead, with associated structures designed by local architects Charles Holt, Robert Burrows, George Woodhouse and John Smalman Smith. * The cemetery is laid out with a formal axial drive and curvilinear walks dividing the burial areas which exploit the undulating topography of the site. * The layout of the cemetery survives substantially intact, although the Nonconformist

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Chapel (Woodhouse, 1856) and the Roman Catholic Chapel (Holt, 1856) have been lost. * The cemetery contains a good collection of C19 and early C20 funerary monuments which reflect the development of Bolton.

Description written: October 2002 Register Inspector: HMT 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.