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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

ROCHDALE CEMETERY

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Name:	ROCHDALE CEMETERY
District:	Rochdale (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.614675 Longitude: -2.1843615 National Grid Reference: SD 87901 13141 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001565 Date first listed: 03-Dec-2001

Details

A public cemetery designed by Abraham Stansfield, opened in 1855 and extended in the late-C19 and C20.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The leading article in *The Pilot and Rochdale Reporter* of 14 June 1847 considered that the need for a public cemetery to serve Rochdale was 'rapidly becoming an absolute necessity' as all but one of the fourteen existing burial grounds were either 'loathsome' or nearly filled. The Rochdale Improvement Act, passed in August 1853, included provision for the Rochdale Improvement Commissioners to construct a cemetery (Fishwick 1906). A site had already been approved in December 1852 (*ibid*) and in December 1853 the Commissioners advertised a competition for the design of a 12 acre (5ha) site, including buildings, with awards offered of £20, £10, and £5 (*Rochdale Sentinel*, 24 December 1853).

The cemetery was planned by Abraham Stansfield, assisted by two geologists, James Horsfall of Healey Nursery and Robert Law of Todmorden (*Rochdale Observer* 1996) The opening on 28 April 1855 was attended by many thousands (*Rochdale Sentinel*, 5 May 1855). At the opening the entrance was complete and two adjoining lodges almost so, while foundation stones for the Church of England and Dissenters' chapels were laid as part of the ceremony by the Bishop of Manchester and the Chief Constable respectively (*ibid*). Timber chapels were erected as a temporary measure and the boundary between consecrated and unconsecrated ground marked by timber posts (*ibid*).

The Church of England chapel, in Norman style with a square central tower, was designed by architect R Moffat Smith of Manchester and cost c £950 (*The Builder* 1855). The Dissenters' chapel, by architect Fowles of Rochdale, was modelled on the Erectheum at Athens (*ibid*). By 1868 a Roman Catholic chapel had been constructed and the division between consecrated and unconsecrated ground was marked by twenty-seven pillars, each of a different stone, set in geological sequence and engraved with the name and origin of the stone (Baines 1868). This feature was probably created by geologists Horsfall and Law and is believed to be unique (*Rochdale Observer* 1996). The number of pillars was eventually increased to at least thirty, of which twenty-eight now (2001) remain.

The Rochdale Improvement Act of 1872 allowed the Corporation to buy further land to extend the cemetery and, in 1874, 11 acres (c 4.5ha) were purchased (Fishwick 1906). The cemetery was further extended in the C20, to the north-west and north. In the 1930s a crematorium was constructed in the north of the cemetery and, by 1955, a detached book room had been constructed at the head of terraced memorial gardens to the west. The Anglican chapel was demolished in 1950 and the Nonconformist

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
ROCHDALE CEMETERY

chapel in c 1972 following the re-dedication of the Roman Catholic chapel for inter-denominational use. Rochdale Cemetery remains (2001) in use and in the ownership of Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The irregularly shaped site is located 1.5km west of Rochdale town centre and is c 12ha in area. The cemetery is bounded by Bury Road to the south, Sandy Lane to the south-east and east, and partly by Hudson Walk to the north. To the west there is a short boundary with Oulder Hill Drive with indented boundaries to the south-west and north-west adjoining C20 housing. A school is situated immediately to the north of the late-C20 extension area (outside the area here registered). The south boundary is marked to the east by a low stone wall, formerly supporting railings, and to the west by a c 1.5m high stone wall. Stone walls c 2m high mark the boundaries to the east and to the south-west corner. The west and adjoining north-north-west boundaries are marked by low stone walls, formerly supporting railings. The northern boundary, adjoining Hudson Walk, is marked by an inter-war, low stone wall topped with railings between stone piers. The north boundary, adjacent to the cemetery extension, is marked with C20 mesh fencing. Boundaries are generally lined with mature trees. East of the principal entrance the south boundary wall incorporates two stones in the geological series, one being the final stone in the geological sequence. The first stone in the sequence is set in the east boundary wall 250m north-east of the principal entrance.

The cemetery is sited on high ground to the north of the River Roch. The southern area of the cemetery is laid out on steeply undulating ground giving dramatic views within the cemetery and occasional long views out towards Knowl Moor to the north-west and the town centre to the east. In the northern area of the cemetery the ground slopes up gradually from the north-east corner and from the west boundary with Oulder Hill Drive towards the centre. From the western area there are views out over the river valley to the south. From the north-west corner of the site a stream, Red Brook, flows east for c 150m at the base of a steep-sided valley before entering a culvert c 80m west of the crematorium. The OS map of 1877 shows this stream extending to Sandy Lane to the east and forming the northern boundary of the cemetery. To the north of the stream valley the northern extension area of the cemetery (outside the area here registered) slopes gently up to the west. The surrounding area is largely residential with a school and golf course to the north-west and the Cemetery Hotel public house opposite the south-east corner of the cemetery.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance (listed grade II) lies on the south boundary and is marked by a carriage entrance flanked by two pedestrian entrances. The carriage entrance has a large stone arch below a stepped parapet and is set between octagonal buttresses. The pedestrian entrances are set below smaller arches. There are cast-iron gates, dated 1855, to all three openings, with one of the centre pair bearing the inscription 'Samuel Barnish/Maker/Rochdale'. Immediately east and west of this entrance there are two stone lodges, both of two storeys below slate roofs. The western lodge incorporates the cemetery office and has a C20 extension to the west; it is served by a vehicle entrance formed by a break in the boundary wall. An entrance at the centre of the west boundary to Oulder Hill Drive is marked by plain square piers in coursed stone flanking a pair of C20 metal gates. Some 380m north of the principal entrance, on the northern boundary of the cemetery extension (outside the area here registered), a wide vehicle entrance is marked by a pair of plain C20 metal gates set between stone piers in line with the boundary wall. A pedestrian entrance at the north-east corner of the cemetery is in similar style but without a gate.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS The C19 cemetery chapel is sited on high ground 200m north-north-east of the principal entrance. Set on a north/south axis this is a small Gothic-style building in stone below a steep slated roof with a C20 entrance porch to the south. It was formerly the Roman Catholic chapel and was designed by local architect McDougall (Baines 1868).

The crematorium, dated 1938, is sited 300m north of the principal entrance on level ground below a steep embankment to the north. The austere stone building is set on an east/west axis with a short rectangular tower flanked by a tall chapel to the west and a lower range to the east. The design was by the Borough Surveyor and Architect, G H Morgan. The crematorium is approached from the south-west with a wide drive encircling a planting bed. To the west of the crematorium the grounds are laid out with formal memorial gardens on a series of stone-walled terraces which descend into the valley to the west. To the west-south-west of the crematorium, adjoining the approach, there is a small mid-C20 book room with stone walls, full-height glazing, and butterfly roof. To the east the crematorium enclosure is bounded by a 30m long, c 4m high stone wall, running

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
ROCHDALE CEMETERY

north/south. This wall has a large semicircular water basin at the centre of the east elevation and, to the west, incorporates niches for the deposition of ashes.

OTHER LAND Some 15m north of the principal entrance on the south boundary the entrance drive divides at a triangular bed to join a roughly elliptical undulating drive at the head of a steep-sided, low-lying area running from south-west to north-east parallel to the eastern boundary. The low-lying area is divided by a serpentine path running from 50m north-east of the principal entrance to the chapel, which is set to the north of the elliptical drive. Straight paths lead off the serpentine path dividing the area within the elliptical drive. On high ground 110m north-east of the principal entrance, the elliptical drive divides around a children's memorial garden. The garden is bounded by low stone walls, which are retaining to the north, and occupies the site of the former Anglican chapel.

On high ground 100m north-north-west of the principal entrance a wider drive meets the elliptical drive to the north-west and encloses a grassed planting bed which marks the site of the former Nonconformist chapel. The site commands views out over low-lying areas of the cemetery and beyond to the north and east. Burial areas adjacent to both chapel sites include a number of standing monuments interspersed with simple gravestones. Immediately to the north-east of the Nonconformist site a Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cross of Sacrifice commemorates the dead of both World Wars.

West of the Nonconformist chapel site a serpentine path leads west to a point 150m north-west of the principal entrance where it widens at the site of a former drinking fountain. From this point a drive leads directly north and two paths lead southwards to join and enclose a roughly rectangular burial area in the south-west of the cemetery. A planting of mature trees in this area indicates a former layout of circular paths (OS 1893). The north drive divides after 70m with one arm curving north-west and the other north-east. The former connects with the rectilinear path layout in the north-west area of the cemetery adjoining Oulder Hill Drive. The north-east arm continues to form a semicircular drive, joining the elliptical drive 20m west of the remaining chapel. The semicircular drive encloses an area of undulating ground, rising to the south-east, laid out with winding paths. Some 70m north-west of the chapel a path leads north from the semicircular drive to the crematorium.

A low stone wall which runs from c 400m north-west to 360m north-north-east of the principal entrance overlooks the northern slope of a steep-sided valley, rising to the west, which does not form a part of the cemetery used for burials. The stone wall is on the line of the former northern cemetery boundary (OS 1893). To the west a stream runs through the valley between the densely wooded slopes. On the edge of the valley, to the south, a semicircular wooded area is enclosed by a c 2m high stone wall. This is a former grounds maintenance area with, to the east, former stone outbuildings which are now (2001) ruinous. In the east of the valley the stream is culverted and the ground is laid out as a terraced memorial garden adjoining the crematorium. The former stone wall boundary terminates 50m north-east of the crematorium, adjacent to the northern entrance drive.

The north-east area of the cemetery is laid out in a grid pattern to the east of a main drive leading north from the elliptical drive towards the north entrance on the boundary to Hudson Walk. A drive leads west from this main drive to the crematorium from a point some 300m north-north-east of the principal entrance.

The central and southern areas of the cemetery are extensively planted with mature trees, both deciduous and evergreen, used particularly to define main drives and paths. The majority of the stones which form the geological trail are sited along the elliptical drive in the south of the cemetery.

Rochdale Cemetery contains memorials to many notable local people including, immediately north of the principal entrance, one of 1865 to Alderman Thomas Livesey, Chairman of the Cemetery Committee at its opening. Also buried in the cemetery are sixteen members of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society, whose first shop opened in 1844 in Toad Lane; Rochdale is now regarded as the home of the co-operative movement.

REFERENCES

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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
ROCHDALE CEMETERY

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Maps Copy of OS 6" to 1 mile, 1st edition published 1851 revised by the Rochdale Corporation up to January 1st 1877 (Rochdale Local Studies Library)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1851 1928 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1893 1910 edition 1930 edition Archival items A collection of C19 and C20 illustrations, C20 photographs, and C19 notes from local newspapers is held at the Rochdale Local Studies Library. Late C19/early C20 photographs (Rochdale Cemetery Office) C20 press cuttings (Rochdale Cemetery Office)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Rochdale Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Rochdale Cemetery is a High Victorian garden cemetery (1855). * The cemetery was laid out by Abraham Stansfield, assisted by local geologists James Horsfall and Robert Law. * The division between the consecrated and unconsecrated portions of the cemetery is uniquely marked by a series of stone pillars, each formed from different identified stone. * The layout of the cemetery survives substantially intact although both the Anglican and Nonconformist chapels by R Moffat Smith of Manchester and Fowles of Rochdale respectively have been lost. * The cemetery contains a good collection of C19 and early C20 funerary monuments reflecting the development of Rochdale. * The cemetery contains a crematorium and memorial garden designed in 1938 by the Borough Surveyor and Architect G H Morgan.

Description written: September 2001 Amended: October 2001 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.