

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

NEWCASTLE GENERAL CEMETERY

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**NEWCASTLE GENERAL CEMETERY**

Name:	NEWCASTLE GENERAL CEMETERY
District:	Newcastle upon Tyne (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.983350 Longitude: -1.5995117 National Grid Reference: NZ 25728 65490 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001181 Date first listed: 01-Jan-1985

## Details

A cemetery with entrances, chapels and a lodge designed in 1836 by John Dobson.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Newcastle General Cemetery Company was formed in 1834 and John Dobson (1787-1865) was commissioned to design the buildings and layout on land purchased from Newcastle Corporation. Dobson produced a perspective view of a scheme for the cemetery which was published with the Shareholders Prospectus in 1834 but this was not executed. A wash drawing by Dobson in the Laing Art Gallery has some similarities with the perspective and may represent his initial plans for the site. Dobson was the leading architect of his generation in the north-east of England who is noted as a distinguished proponent of the Greek Revival style (Pevsner 1967). The cemetery has been described as 'among Dobson's finest works ... one of the great architectural achievements of nineteenth century cemetery design' (Brooks 1989) and as 'an ensemble of the highest quality' (CL 1981). It is currently (1998) open and in use for interments.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The cemetery is situated c 2km north-east of the centre of Newcastle upon Tyne in an urban area. The c 4ha site is on a triangular plot of level land surrounded by a stone wall (listed grade II\* with the entrances) c 2.5m in height. Jesmond Road runs along the north side where there is a wide verge between the wall and pavement. This area was a shrubbery enclosed by railings, as shown on the 1st edition 6" and 1:500 OS maps of the late C19, but the railings have been removed and the verge is now grassed (1998). Sandyford Road runs along the south side of the site at an angle to Jesmond Road, with which it joins at the north-east tip of the cemetery.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** There are two main entrances to the cemetery. The principal entrance (listed grade II\*) on Jesmond Road is in Greek Revival style. It consists of a central arch with iron gates flanked by square towers with a single-storey pedimented chapel attached on each side. The elevation to the road has no windows or doors, which are confined to return elevations and the inner face of the building. J C Loudon described this entrance as 'the most appropriate cemetery lodge' which could 'never be mistaken either for an entrance to a public park or to a country residence' (quoted in Brooks 1989; Green 1995). The Anglican chapel was on the west side and the Nonconformist on the east, with vaults beneath them for overnight storage of coffins. The buildings were restored in 1978 and are currently (1998) in use as offices.

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A second entrance (listed grade II\*), also in severe Greek style, is on Sandyford Road, where the perimeter wall steps inwards, with piers at the angles, and a central entrance is flanked by massive square-section pylons capped by sarcophagi and pierced by pedestrian entrances. A lodge (listed grade II\* with the entrance) lies immediately north-east of this entrance. A third entrance is a simple opening with a cast-iron gate close to the junction of Jesmond Road and Sandyford Road.

**OTHER LAND** The main axis of the site is a route running along the north side of the site parallel with Jesmond Road which has the main entrance as its focus. The other routes are informal, and a winding carriage drive leads south-east from the main entrance to the south entrance which is concealed by mounding planted with trees on the east side of the drive. Winding perimeter paths lead from the south entrance and join with each end of the axial route on the north side of the site. This system of paths conforms with what is shown on the 1st edition 25" OS map, since which time additional paths have been formed to give access to the monuments. This map also shows two rectangular blocks on either side of the carriage drive. The northernmost appears to survive in the form of a low stone revetment, c 40m south of the main entrance, which is covered with monuments. The site is planted with mature trees and shrubs, including examples of weeping ash, lime, yew, weeping willow and holly. The 1st edition 25" OS map shows that the site was thickly planted, and Dobson's perspective view shows perimeter planting and planted mounds. The monuments include memorials to leading figures in C19 Newcastle including John Dobson himself, whose gravestone (listed grade II) lies c 175m south-west of the main entrance. The most prominent monument, situated c 100m south-west of the main entrance, was designed by Dobson for Archibald Reed, six times Mayor of Newcastle, in the form of a tall, Gothic Revival-style pinnacle (listed grade II).

The area between the axial north walk and the perimeter wall was cleared of monuments and planting during the 1970s in advance of a proposed road scheme, as was a similar swathe along the southern perimeter. These areas are now (1998) grassed.

#### REFERENCES

H Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects* (1978), p 264 L Wilkes, *John Dobson* (1989), pp 66, 98 *Country Life*, 170 (2 July 1981), pp 68-69 T Faulkner and A Greg, *John Dobson* (1987), p 40 C Brooks, *Mortal Remains* (1989) N Pevsner et al, *The Buildings of England: Northumberland* (1992), p 510 C Brooks, *English Historic Cemeteries, a Theme Study*, (English Heritage 1994), pp 60-1 *A Guide to the Historic Parks and Gardens of Tyne and Wear*, (Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team 1995), p 28

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1848 2nd edition published 1894 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1859-64 OS 1:500: 1st edition published 1896

Illustrations John Dobson, *View of a Cemetery*, c 1830s (Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne)

**REASONS FOR DESIGNATION** Newcastle General Cemetery is designated at Grade II\* for the following principal reasons:

- \* An early garden cemetery (1836), of the second decade of garden cemetery design, for a provincial city.
- \* A complex design by a notable local architect, John Dobson, the leading architect of his generation in the north-east of England and a distinguished proponent of the Greek Revival style.
- \* Dobson's buildings here represent a fine example of his monumental Greek Revival style used on an heroic scale to compliment an informal layout.
- \* Local and national social interest expressed in monuments.
- \* The site layout survives complete although with the loss of some monuments

Description written: April 1998 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: September 2000 Upgraded: November 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.