

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ARNOS VALE CEMETERY

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**ARNOS VALE CEMETERY**

Name: ARNOS VALE CEMETERY

District: City of Bristol (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.441300  
Longitude: -2.5669860  
National Grid Reference: ST 60689 71520  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II\*  
List Entry Number: 1000559  
Date first listed: 30-Apr-1987

## Details

A cemetery laid out 1837-40 by the Bristol General Cemetery Company to designs by Charles Underwood, with planting by the Bristol nurserymen James Garraway and Martin Mayes.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the late-C18 the land which was to be developed as Arnos Vale Cemetery probably formed part of the estate associated with Arnos Court, a mansion built by William Reeves, a Bristol copper merchant c 1760-5 (Pevsner 1958; Pearson Assocs 1999). Reeves became bankrupt in 1774 and his estate was divided and sold. During the early-C19 a villa, known as Arno's Vale, was constructed to the west of Arnos Court and within the area subsequently developed as Arnos Vale Cemetery. A plan of the Arnos Vale Estate by George Ashmead (1830) shows that the villa was situated towards the north-east corner of the site with an entrance approximately on the site of the present principal entrance to the cemetery (copy plan included in Pearson Assocs, 1999). The villa was screened from Bath Road by a belt of boundary planting, while there was further boundary planting to the south and south-east. A combe ascending south-west from the villa was planted with clumps of trees. Much of this planting was retained when the cemetery was developed on the site of the villa.

By the mid C19 the burial grounds attached to the city's churches were essentially full. Matthew's Bristol Directory for 1845 noted that 'upwards of 2,400 bodies are now annually added to the mass of corruption already existent in about ten acres of ground, most of which is situate in densely populated districts of the city' (Pearson Assocs 1999). In 1837 the Bristol General Cemetery Company was formed and petitioned Parliament for an Act to enable the formation of a general cemetery in the vicinity of the city. Following the passage of the Act, the company proceeded to purchase the Arnos Vale Estate. In 1838 they demolished the villa and commissioned plans for the laying out of the site and the construction of walls, lodges, and chapels from Charles Underwood (c 1791-1883). This work appears to have been completed by October 1840 when the Anglican section of the cemetery was consecrated by the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. In 1841 the directors reported that the cost of purchasing the site, building the chapels, roads and other structures, planting, and preparing 112 brick graves for use had cost £13,340 (Annual Report, 1841). The Tithe map of 1843 shows that while only the eastern half of the site was initially appropriated for burials, the company retained existing tree belts to the north and west on land held in reserve for future expansion. This planting forms the backdrop to the cemetery in an engraved view of c 1850 (BRO). As early as 1845 the Bristol Mirror reported that the company had ordered the construction of new 'walks, paths and terraces' and the planting of some 2000 ornamental

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trees and shrubs under the direction of the Bristol nurserymen James Garraway and Martin Mayes (c 1801-58) (Pearson Assocs 1999). Despite these embellishments, it was not until 1855 when the city churchyards were finally closed that the cemetery began to see a significant rise in the number of interments (ibid). The late-C19 OS map (1882) indicates extensive ornamental planting within the cemetery, while comparison with the 2nd edition (1904) shows further development of the path pattern. In order to maximise the usable ground within the cemetery, new parallel walks were laid out within areas enclosed by the mid-C19 curvilinear drives.

Between 1855 and 1880 the company extended the area used for burials to encompass the whole estate purchased in 1837. A second Act of Parliament obtained in 1880 enabled the company to purchase additional land to the south of the original cemetery. A further extension was purchased in 1891. The western portion of this ground was laid out by 1904 (OS), while the remainder had been appropriated for burials by c 1944 (OS). To cater for changing fashion, a crematorium, cloister, and columbarium were designed by H G Laing of Lincoln's Inn, London in 1927. These structures, together with a garden of rest, were developed around the C19 Nonconformist chapel in 1927-9, and continued in use until 1998 (Pearson Assocs, 1999).

During the late-C20 revenue from the operation of the cemetery and crematorium decreased and reduced maintenance led to the growth of scrub and secondary woodland within the cemetery. In 1987 the site was sold to a new private owner, and proposals were made for the redevelopment of the upper sections of the cemetery; these plans were not implemented. Today (2002) the site remains in private ownership.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Arnos Vale Cemetery is situated c 2km south-east of the centre of the city of Bristol, to the south of the A4, Bath Road. The c 17ha site is bounded to the north by Bath Road, from which the cemetery is separated by mid C19 rubble-stone walls. To the north-east the site adjoins the Roman Catholic cemetery from which it is divided by a further mid-C19 stone wall. The Roman Catholic cemetery was established c 1860 on land which had formed part of the Arnos Court Estate (ibid). The stone boundary wall continues to the south of this cemetery, separating the site from an area of open ground which survives from the C18 park associated with Arnos Court. To the south, outside the area registered, Arnos Vale cemetery adjoins late-C19 domestic properties in Somerset Road, from which it is separated by a stone wall, while to the west a further stone wall separates it from similar domestic properties in Hawthorn Street. The mid-C19 cemetery (the site here registered) is situated on a steep north-facing slope with a combe descending from south-west to north-east through the site. The late-C19 cemetery extension to the south (outside the area here registered), which is partly separated from the earlier area by a mid-C19 stone wall, occupies a level plateau at the summit of the north-facing slope. The ground falls away steeply to the east of the cemetery extension into a wooded combe. There are significant views north from the mid-C19 cemetery across the centre of Bristol; these are partly obscured by late-C20 scrub. Similarly, significant views within the cemetery from the terraced walks on the steep slopes above the combe towards the chapels and lodges have been eroded by encroaching vegetation.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The principal entrance to Arnos Vale Cemetery is from Bath Road to the north, at a point c 200m west of Arnos Court. The entrance comprises a pair of cast-iron carriage gates with spear-headed vertical rails which are supported by a pair of stone piers under pedimented caps, which are in turn flanked by similar cast-iron railings extending east and west to a pair of Greek Revival-style stone lodges (all listed grade II\*). The single-storey lodges are designed as a pair of Doric temples, with pedimented facades placed opposite and facing each other across the entrance drive. A cast-iron pedestrian gate matching the carriage gates and railings is placed beneath the portico of each lodge. The entrance is flanked by a pair of quadrant walls (listed grade II\*), lawns and shrubbery, which were formerly separated from the road by further railings and stone bollards (ibid). The entrance was designed by Charles Underwood in 1837-8 as part of the initial scheme for laying out the cemetery and appears to be located at approximately the same point as the entrance to the villa shown on George Ashmead's plan of the Arnos Vale Estate (1830).

A further entrance is situated on the western boundary of the site adjacent to the junction of Cemetery Road and Hawthorn Street. Two pairs of mid-C19 cast-iron carriage gates are supported by stone piers under flat caps, with a similar pedestrian gate to the south (all listed grade II). Within the cemetery, c 10m east of the entrance, stands a mid-C19 two-storey lodge

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(disused, 2002). Constructed in rendered stone and brick, the lodge has an ornamental facade facing north towards the mid-C19 cemetery, with a central gable surmounting an arched doorway, ornamental bargeboards, and decorative ridge tiles. The lodge appears to have been constructed by Charles Underwood in 1837-8, possibly on the site of an earlier structure shown on Ashmead's plan of the Arnos Vale Estate (1830). As built, the lodge stood at the western end of the southern boundary wall of the cemetery; sections of this wall survive to the east of the lodge, separating the mid-C19 cemetery from the late-C19 cemetery extension to the south.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS** Beyond the principal entrance leading into the cemetery from Bath Road, a broad tarmac drive sweeps south-east and south-west to enclose a large elliptical-shaped lawn, and provide access to two mid C19 stone mortuary chapels which are situated c 130m to the south-west and c 140m to the south-east of the entrance.

The south-east or Anglican chapel (listed grade II\*) is constructed in Neoclassical style with a monumental entrance facade to the north-west approached from the drive by a broad flight of stone steps and surmounted by a classical cupola based on the Roman monument at St Remy, France (listed building description). This cupola serves as an eyecatcher in views from higher ground within the cemetery. The side facades are ornamented with monumental Corinthian pilasters, while to the south-east a projecting bay is lit by a Venetian window. The Anglican chapel was built in 1837-8 to the design of Charles Underwood as part of the initial scheme for the development of the cemetery. The chapel is now (2002) disused.

The south-west or Nonconformist chapel (listed grade II\*) is designed in the style of an Ionic temple, with a broad flight of stone steps ascending to a monumental Greek Ionic portico to the north-east. The side elevations are left plain, while tall rectangular windows separated by pilasters light the south-west facade. The Nonconformist chapel was built, also in 1837-8, to the designs of Charles Underwood. To the south, the chapel is adjoined by a stone crematorium building designed in Neoclassical style by H G Malcolm Laing of London in 1927. A later single-storey, flat-roofed concrete porch for sheltering hearses projects from the north-east facade of this building. To the south-west of the crematorium is a mid-C20 Neoclassical-style columbarium in the form of a single-storey semicircular loggia constructed in rendered brick. This structure was designed by Laing in 1927. There are further structures associated with the crematorium to the north-west of the Nonconformist chapel, including a tall stone chimney which appears originally to have served the chapel boilers. Today (2002), neither the chapel nor the crematorium is in use.

**OTHER LAND** Arnos Vale Cemetery is laid out on steep, north-facing slopes and on the sides and floor of a combe which extends from south-west to north-east through the site. The ground on the steeper slopes to the south is generally terraced to form level walks with burial plots and ornamental planting arranged to each side. The lower ground is laid out with curvilinear walks and drives enclosing irregularly-shaped areas of lawn, ornamental planting, and burial plots. The late-C19 and early-C20 extension on level high ground to the south of the mid C19 cemetery is laid out to a geometrical plan.

The principal drive leading from the main or north entrance to the chapels forms a processional route enclosing an approximately elliptical-shaped area of lawn planted with mature specimen trees and shrubbery, together with C20 flowering trees. An important collection of C19 funerary monuments is arranged on each side of the drive, with two parallel ranks of monuments on the inner side. Significant monuments include that dedicated to Raja Rammohun Roy Bahadoor (d 1833, reburied at Arnos Vale 1840), an elaborate Indian-style structure (listed grade II\*) designed by William Prinsep, which stands c 80m south-west of the west lodge. The northern section of the lawn facing the entrance forms a triangular-shaped area enclosed by C20 hedges, which is used as a garden of remembrance for the interment of ashes. Mid C19 photographs indicate that the area south of the principal entrance was carefully planted to create an Arcadian setting for monuments to the socially prominent of Bristol (Pearson Assocs 1999). Some of this structural planting survives today (2002).

A further garden of remembrance comprising an area of lawn enclosed by hedges is situated to the east of the Nonconformist chapel and C20 columbarium. This garden is entered through a monumental portico which formed part of the 1927 crematorium scheme designed by H G Laing. A walk leading from the principal drive south-west between the chapel and the garden of remembrance sweeps west and south to reach the terraced walks on the north-facing slope above the chapels and north-east lawn. Adjacent to a subsidiary path c 100m south of the Nonconformist chapel, a large Classical-style marble sarcophagus set on an elaborate plinth (all listed grade II) commemorates Thomas Gadd Matthews (d 1860), a Bristol oil and indigo merchant.

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The monument is set within an enclosure formed by bollards and rails, within which are the remnants of a low box hedge and four specimen Irish yews marking the corners of the plot. The monument straddles the line dividing the consecrated and unconsecrated sections of the mid-C19 cemetery, to allow Matthews and his wife, who was a Nonconformist, to be buried in the same grave (listed building description). The terraced walks south of the chapels are today heavily overgrown with scrub, but within this undergrowth many specimen trees, some possibly surviving from the designed landscape associated with the villa previously on this site, remain, together with evergreen shrubs which form the setting for a significant collection of mid and late C19 funerary monuments, including several mid-C19 examples by Tyley of Bristol (examples listed grade II). The north-east lawn, areas around the chapels, and the north-facing terraces formed the original extent of the cemetery laid out in 1837-8 by Charles Underwood.

The area to the west and north-west of the Nonconformist chapel comprises the upper section of the combe running through the site, a steep north-facing slope above Bath Road, and the south-east-facing slopes above the combe. A wide concrete drive leads west from the principal entrance and is initially aligned on a war memorial (listed grade II) which stands above an east-facing grass slope. The memorial, which was constructed c 1920, comprises a central flat-roofed loggia with five arched openings and flanking stone walls. The loggia shelters the memorial inscriptions and allows a view east towards the lodges. Beyond the war memorial, the drive sweeps south-west, passing to the north-west of the steep-sided upper combe, to reach the south-west entrance and upper lodge. The upper, or north-west side of the drive is retained by low stone walls, in which are set alcoves which formerly contained seats allowing views across the combe and cemetery. These views are now largely obscured by scrub. The burial areas above, or north-west, of the drive are generally arranged to a grid plan and contain many late-C19 and early-C20 monuments. Some late-C19 metal division markers survive in this area to allow the cemetery management or visitors to locate the required grave. These burial areas are today (2002) heavily overgrown with scrub. The north-facing slope above Bath Road is similarly laid out for burials, but here some mature specimen trees, possibly surviving from an early C19 boundary plantation, remain. The upper section of the combe appears not to have been utilised for burials, but is again overgrown and subject to late-C20 fly-tipping. The area to the west and north-west of the Nonconformist chapel formed part of the site purchased in 1837 by the Bristol General Cemetery Company, but was not laid out and brought into use until c 1860 (Pearson Assocs, 1999).

REFERENCES Pevsner N, *The Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol* (1958), 460-3 Brooks C, *Mortal Remains* (1989), 128 Arnos Vale Cemetery Regeneration Study - Landscape Proposals, (Nicholas Pearson Associates 1999)

Maps Ashmead G, *Map of Arnos Vale Estate in the Parish of Bedminster in the County of Somerset, 1830* (copy reproduced in Pearson Assocs 1999) Tithe map for Brislington parish, 1843 (T/PH/ti), (Somerset Record Office) Plan of land acquired for cemetery extension, 1891 (17896/6), (Bristol Record Office) H G Laing, Plans for crematorium, garden of rest, columbarium, 1927 (Building Plans vol 83, folio 12), (Bristol Record Office)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1882 2nd edition revised 1904 3rd edition revised 1916 1944 edition

Illustrations Engraved view of Arnos Vale Cemetery from the north entrance showing chapels and planting, c 1850 (Picture Box 2, no 102), (Bristol Record Office) Photographs of Arnos Vale Cemetery, mid-C19 - early-C20 (Bristol Library Collection) [reproduced in Pearson Assocs 1999]

Archival items Annual Reports of the Directors of the Bristol General Cemetery Company, 1838 - late C19 (35486/49), (Bristol Record Office)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Arnos Vale Cemetery is designated at Grade II\* for the following principal reasons: \* A fine, early garden cemetery (1837-40) of the second decade of garden cemetery design, for a provincial city \* Complex picturesque design by architect Charles Underwood, and planting by the Bristol nurserymen James Garraway and Martin Mayes. \* The artistically notable Greek Revival chapels by Underwood form the focus of the layout, heralded by the pair of lodges in similar style. \* The site layout survives largely complete although with the removal of some monuments and has suffered neglect. \* Local, national and international social interest expressed in burials and a variety of artistically notable monuments particularly that of Raja Rammohun Roy Bahadoor.

Description written: April 2002 Amended: May 2002 Register Inspector: JML Edited: January 2004 Updated: 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.