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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE ROSARY CEMETERY

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Name:	THE ROSARY CEMETERY
County:	Norfolk
District:	Norwich (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.627382 Longitude: 1.3146708 National Grid Reference: TG 24430 08450 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001568 Date first listed: 04-Dec-2001

Details

Laid out in 1819, The Rosary was the first Nonconformist municipal cemetery to be created in England.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Rosary cemetery was established in 1819 by a Presbyterian minister, the Rev Thomas Drummond. He had recognised the need for a public burial ground as graveyards attached to churches became overcrowded, and he proposed to develop a general, municipal cemetery on freehold land which would be guaranteed for all time. Some 5 acres (c 2ha) of land on the east side of Norwich city, formerly used as a market garden, were purchased in 1819 and a board of twelve trustees set up. It took two years to gain Episcopalian recognition and to lay out the ground which was divided into sections, separated by tree and shrub plantings, and set beside a small chapel. The trustees began collecting shareholders in 1824 and Rev Drummond's wife was the first to be buried, being re-interred here from the Octagon Chapel in the city. Even then, because the ground was not consecrated, the established church largely ignored The Rosary, which was favoured by Nonconformists. Between 1824 and 1884 some 18,000 burials took place. A lodge by J S Benest was built in 1860 and the mortuary chapel was redesigned by Edward Boardman, the Norwich architect, in 1879. The original Board of Trustees included local entrepreneurs, gentlemen, manufacturers, and artists, many of whom were eventually buried here, their graves marked by a variety of elaborate mid and late C19 monuments. In 1903 a further 8 acres (c 3.5ha) was purchased to allow an extension to the north-east and this was laid out in 1924, following advice received from Captain Sandys-Winsch, head of the council parks department and the designer of Eaton Park, Wensum Park, Waterloo Park, and Heigham Park in Norwich (qv). In 1954 The Rosary became the responsibility of Norwich City Council and the oldest section of the cemetery was largely left to nature. Following suggestions during the 1970s that the area be improved, the Friends of the Rosary Cemetery was established in 1983 to help protect its historic character. The site remains (2001) a working cemetery, in public ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Rosary cemetery is situated to the south-east of the centre of Norwich, in the suburb of Thorpe Hamlet. Although the setting is now urban, the site itself retains much of its C19 rural character. The c 4ha site is enclosed partly by a high wall of gault brick and partly by C20 fencing. It falls gently from north-

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east to south-west, with a more dramatic, terraced cross slope in the southern section which descends from the high ground in the south-east towards the chapel. The site is bounded to north-west and south-east by the gardens of private houses, to the north-east by Telegraph Lane East, and to the south-west by Thorpe Road and the gardens of properties in that road.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the cemetery is from the south-west, off Thorpe Road. The cemetery lodge and office (listed grade II) is built of gault brick under a slate roof in the Tudor-Gothic style and was erected in 1860 by J S Benest, of Norwich. The building is of a single storey with attics and has mullion windows and bears the inscription 'Rosary Cemetery Office' on a stone set in the south-west gable end facing the road. The drive off Thorpe Road runs north-east for c 100m flanked by the gardens of private houses, to the mortuary chapel which stands in the south-west corner of the main body of the site.

A second, pedestrian entrance is located in the centre of the north-east boundary, on Telegraph Lane East.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The mortuary chapel (listed grade II) is a Gothic Revival building of knapped flint with stone dressings, under a tiled roof. It has a two-bay nave and chancel with south porch surmounted by a belfry. Millard and Manning's city map of 1830 shows a building standing in the position of the present chapel and Norfolk Genealogy records that a chapel was erected when the cemetery was first laid out in 1819-21; the present building however was designed by the Norwich architect Edward Boardman in 1879 and includes a re-set tablet bearing the inscription 'The Rosary burial ground for persons of all denomination registered at the office of the lord Bishop of Norwich June 14th 1821'.

OTHER LAND The cemetery ground is divided in half by a high brick wall, the early C19 site lying to the south-west and the early C20 extension to the north-east. Aligned on the door into the chapel standing in the south-west corner, a series of parallel walks laid out in a simple grid pattern lead through the cemetery ground, where a minimal level of maintenance has retained the character of the original naturalistic planting and has allowed the area to develop for the benefit of wildlife. Those paths running towards the south-east boundary rise on sets of simple steps through a terraced slope on which stands a dense informal planting of mature, native broadleaved trees. The south-west boundary wall and part of the main south-west to north-east walk are lined with mature lime trees. Throughout this part of the cemetery many of the original informal plantings of mature trees survive, set beside a varied collection of mid and late C19 monuments. From the point where the main drive enters the cemetery, a perimeter drive encloses the cemetery ground along the south-west and south-east boundaries. It forks at the central dividing wall, one arm continuing north-east into the C20 area, the other turning north-west to run alongside the dividing wall.

Beyond the central dividing wall, the north-east half of the cemetery was laid out in the early C20, following advice received from the head of the City Council's Parks Department, Captain Sandys-Winsch. The central axis walk from the C19 section continues through a gateway in the wall and rises gently up through the C20 section, flanked by mature trees. A grid system of part tarmac and part grass paths runs off this, many bordered by a mix of younger broadleaved trees. The far north-east end of the site is not divided by paths but comprises large numbers of later C20 gravestones set in grass.

REFERENCES

Norfolk Genealogy 18, The Rosary Cemetery (1986) Geoffrey Goreham, Norwich Heritage (1977), p 20 C Brookes, English Historic Cemeteries, (English Heritage theme study 1994), p 61 N Pevsner and B Wilson, The Buildings of England: Norfolk 1 Norwich and North-east (1998 edn), p 342 F Meeres, A History of Norwich (1998), p 122

Maps W S Millard and J Manning, City map, 1830 (MF/60 397/6), (Norfolk Record Office) A W Morant, Map of the city of Norwich, 1873 (N/TC 62/2), (Norfolk Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1880-82, published 1888 2nd edition published 1908 1938 edition

Archival items Deed of regulations, 1841 (MC 389/83 730x1), (Norfolk Record Office) Trustees Minute Books, 1824-1911 (MC 71/1; N/TC 5/4; N/C 2/1), (Norfolk Record Office) E Boardman, Plans for cemetery chapel (BR/35/2/31/11), (Norfolk Record Office) The records of the Boardman family architectural practice are held at the Norfolk Record Office (BR35/2), (Norfolk Record Office)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION The Rosary Cemetery is designated at Grade II* for the following principal reasons:

* The earliest garden cemetery in England (1819), The Rosary was also the first non-denominational cemetery to be created in England. * Many of the original informal plantings of mature trees survive, set beside a varied collection of mid and late 19th

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century monuments laid out in a grid pattern. * The chapel was rebuilt to designs by the Norwich architect Edward Boardman in 1879 and includes a re-set tablet bearing the inscription 'The Rosary burial ground for persons of all denomination registered at the office of the lord Bishop of Norwich June 14th 1821'. * The site and its layout survives complete. * Local and national social interest is expressed in the monuments including those to the Colman family, mustard manufacturers.

Description written: September 2001 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: April 2002 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.