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**Inventory of Great Britain**

TROWBRIDGE GENERAL CEMETERY

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**TROWBRIDGE GENERAL CEMETERY**

Name: TROWBRIDGE GENERAL CEMETERY

District: Wiltshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Trowbridge

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.329972  
Longitude: -2.1992539  
National Grid Reference: ST 86214 59005  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1001587  
Date first listed: 29-Jan-2002

## Details

A mid-C19 Burial Board cemetery laid out to the design of C E Davis of Bath.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the C18 and C19 Trowbridge, the county town of Wiltshire, enjoyed considerable prosperity arising particularly from woollen cloth manufacture. By 1854 an Order in Council had been issued for the closure of the existing overcrowded burial grounds in the town, and a Burial Board for the parish of Trowbridge was established by the Vestry in July 1854 (Burial Board Minutes, 18 July 1854). The Board immediately advertised for a site within or without the parish boundary comprising c 8 acres (c 3.2ha), on which to construct a cemetery (Minutes, 1 August 1854). Having viewed several potential sites in early August 1854, the Board finally selected one on The Down, which was offered by one of their members, the Rev J D Hastings, Rector of Trowbridge (Minutes, 5 August 1854). Unfortunately this property, comprising some 15 acres (c 6ha) of glebe land, adjoined residential properties and the consent of the owners and occupiers for the construction of a cemetery as required by law was not forthcoming (Minutes, 25 August 1854). Accordingly, the Board selected an alternative site on The Down, again agreeing to purchase glebe land, and applied for authority to raise a loan of £4000 for the construction of the cemetery (Minutes, 25 August, 29 September 1854).

In October 1854 the Burial Board sent invitations to eight architects to furnish proposals for the cemetery and its buildings (Minutes, 6 October 1854). This list included H E Goodridge of Bath (1797-1864), architect of Lansdown Cemetery, Bath (qv) (1848), G P Manners of Bath (c 1789-1866), City Architect and designer of the chapel at Bath Abbey Cemetery (qv) (1843-4), and James Medland of Gloucester (1808-94), joint designer of Warstone Lane Cemetery, Birmingham (qv) (1848) and Leicester General Cemetery (qv) (1849). Of the plans submitted, the Board chose those by James Medland and Charles Davis of Bath for further consideration, finally choosing Davis' scheme in November 1854 (Minutes, 24 November 1854). Davis' original plan, which does not survive, clearly envisaged a pair of linked chapels, for in December 1854 the Bishop of Salisbury objected to this feature of the design (Minutes, 15 December 1854). A revised plan of 1856 shows the site as laid out with a broad central avenue dividing the consecrated and unconsecrated sections, two chapels, a lodge, and serpentine outer walks. This general scheme was finally approved in late December 1854 (Minutes, 22 December 1854), and in March 1855 Davis was requested to obtain tenders for planting a belt of trees around the perimeter of the site. The Board instructed that this belt should 'contain a large number of funereal Trees', which should not be planted 'too thickly'. The contract for supplying 1500 trees was awarded to

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**TROWBRIDGE GENERAL CEMETERY**

George Wheeler of Warminster (c 1791-1878), who planted them in accordance with a scheme produced by Davis (Minutes, 16 March, 23 March 1855). The contract for constructing the chapels and other buildings was let to William Smith of Trowbridge in March 1855, and the main carriage drive was constructed the following month (Minutes, 27 March, 17 April 1855). The new cemetery was consecrated by the Bishop of Salisbury on 13 December 1855, and the parish sexton, Charles Cheverile, was appointed first 'Superintendary' on 1 January 1856 (Minutes, 19 October, 28 December 1855). The planting of the new cemetery continued into early 1856, with George Wheeler being paid over £80 for plants supplied in March and April; thereafter one of the members of the Board, William Stancomb, was authorised to deal with Wheeler 'as necessary' (Minutes, 14 March, 23 May 1856). It is said that in the mid-C19 the new cemetery proved to be such a public attraction that a toll gate had to be moved in order that residents could visit it without paying tolls (Rogers 1984).

In the late-C20 the cemetery was extended to the south-east; this area lies outside the site here registered. The mid-C19 cemetery remains (2001) substantially unchanged, retaining its chapels, lodge, and structural planting together with several significant monuments and mausolea which reflect the prosperity of Trowbridge in the C19 and early-C20. The cost of laying out the cemetery in 1854-5 exceeded £5000 (VCH 1953), a high sum for a relatively small site; of this nearly £2000 was spent on the construction of the chapels, lodge, and other structures (Minutes, 27 March 1855). The site remains open for burials and in municipal ownership (2001).

The designer of Trowbridge Cemetery, Charles Davis, who served as City Architect in Bath (1862-1902), was also responsible for designing Weston-Super-Mare Cemetery (1855) and Lyncombe Cemetery, Bath (1859) (Brooks 1989).

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Trowbridge Cemetery is situated c 1.25km north-east of the centre of Trowbridge to the east of The Down, a road leading from Trowbridge to the village of Staverton, at a point c 300m north-east of its junction with the B3106, Canal Road. The c 3ha site is rectangular on plan and is bounded to the north-west by The Down from which it is separated by a mid-C19 stone wall. The south-west boundary is formed by a mid-C19 ditch and retaining wall, above which is a late-C20 hawthorn hedge; this feature is described in the Burial Board Minutes as the 'ha-ha wall' and was constructed in April 1855 (Minutes, 17 April 1855). Today (2001), the wall and ditch separate the cemetery from mid-C20 domestic properties in Downside Park to the south-west and the late-C20 cemetery extension to the south-east. To the north-east and east the site is enclosed by fences and hedges which separate it from C20 domestic properties in Victoria Road and Victoria Gardens. The site is level with few views extending beyond the mature boundary planting.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Trowbridge Cemetery is approached from The Down to the north-west. The entrance (listed grade II) is set at the central point of the boundary wall and comprises quadrant stone walls surmounted by spear-headed metal railings, which terminate in stone piers surmounted by gabled saddle stones at the point at which they join the higher boundary walls. The quadrant walls adjoin an elaborate entrance comprising a pair of wrought-iron carriage gates flanked by a pair of wrought-iron pedestrian gates. The southern pedestrian gate is set beneath a high gothic arch surmounted by a Celtic cross finial and supported by stone buttresses surmounted by high, chimney-like finials; that to the north is set beneath the projecting two-storey porch of the lodge (listed grade II) which immediately adjoins the entrance. The two-storey Gothic-style lodge is constructed in stone under gabled tiled roofs. Beyond the entrance a broad, straight tarmac drive flanked by an avenue of mature Irish yews extends c 270m south-east towards the eastern boundary, where the visual axis is terminated by a mature weeping silver lime.

The entrance and lodge were designed by Charles Davis in 1854 and constructed in 1855. The twelve marker stones designed by Davis in 1855 to be placed along the main drive to indicate the limit of the consecrated ground do not survive in situ (2001) (Minutes, 19 September 1855).

An informal entrance at the south-east corner of the site leads from the mid-C19 cemetery to the late-C20 cemetery extension.  
**PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS** The two cemetery chapels (both listed grade II) are placed asymmetrically to the north and south of the main drive. The northern or Nonconformist chapel stands c 80m east of the entrance and comprises a low cruciform structure with a tower surmounted by a spire and weathervane at its south-west corner. The stone building is constructed in Early English style with tall lancet windows and simple tracery. A timber door with ornamental wrought-iron strapwork is placed in the west

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*TROWBRIDGE GENERAL CEMETERY*

facade of the chapel. The tower has pointed arched openings on three sides, and on the fourth a similar door with ornamental iron-work leading into the chapel. Above, tall paired lancet openings allow views through the structure, giving an impression of lightness. Finely carved corbels, including one showing a death's head, support the spire which is flanked by pinnacles.

The south or Anglican chapel is situated c 130m south-east of the entrance and comprises a four-bay chapel with a polygonal apse to the east and a tower at the north-west corner. The stone structure is built in a modified Early English style with short lancet windows. The main entrance on the west facade has a pointed timber door with ornamental wrought-iron strapwork. The three-stage tower is surmounted by an unusual tented pyramidal roof above simple rectangular openings. The second stage has triple lancet openings on each face, while the lowest stage has pointed arched openings on three sides and a door leading to the chapel on the fourth. Unusually, the Anglican chapel appears to be of simpler design than the Nonconformist chapel.

The chapels were designed by Charles Davis in 1854 and built by William Smith in 1855 (Minutes, 27 March 1855). A plan and elevation by Davis of the Nonconformist chapel survives accompanying approval from the Secretary of State, Lord Palmerston for the design, dated 5 January 1855 (Plan, 1854). A scheme for renovating the interior of the Anglican chapel was prepared by the Bath architects Snailum, Huggins & Le Furre in 1952 (Plan and Report, 1952). The chapels remain in use (2001).

**OTHER LAND** Trowbridge Cemetery is divided into two approximately equal sections by the broad drive extending south-east from the entrance to the eastern boundary. Serpentine walks extend parallel to the site boundaries, while curvilinear walks link the boundary walks to the central avenue and the chapels. The path pattern has been slightly simplified since the late-C19 (OS 1886) with two curvilinear walks to the south-east of the Nonconformist chapel being removed in the early C20 (OS 1924), perhaps as more ground was appropriated for burials.

The cemetery is enclosed to the north-east, east, and south-west by belts of mature trees and shrubbery including copper beech, lime, and ilex oak with underplanting of yew and other evergreen shrubs. The boundary belts were formed by George Wheeler in 1855 to a planting plan by Charles Davis (Minutes, 16 March, 23 March 1855). To the north-west of the chapels the planting is characterised by the use of scattered mature specimen Irish yew, green and variegated box, and hollies. To the north of the Nonconformist chapel is a mature Turkey oak, while to the east and south of the Anglican chapel there are further mature specimen oaks. These trees and shrubs are likely to correspond to those supplied by Wheeler in early 1856 (Minutes, 14 March, 23 May 1856). To the south-east of the chapels the site is more open with scattered C20 specimen trees together with some mature horse chestnuts and Irish yews. Towards the middle of the burial plots to the north and south of the main drive in the eastern half of the cemetery slightly raised mounds correspond to areas allocated to pauper burials on Davis' plan of the cemetery (Plan, c 1856). The ornamental planting in the eastern half of the site appears to have been simplified in the early-C20, presumably as more ground was required for purchased grave plots.

The cemetery contains three substantial mausolea and several monuments of significance. Some 200m east-south-east of the entrance, the Rodway mausoleum (listed grade II) abuts the southern boundary. The mausoleum comprises a low barrel-vaulted structure with stone gargoyles at each corner and an ornamental facade composed of a triple-gabled arcade to the north-east. A trefoil-shaped opening containing doors with elaborate wrought-iron strapwork is surmounted by wrought-iron spikes which in-fill an oculus. The structure is entered by a wide flight of stone steps which descends from the level of the cemetery to reach the now derelict interior. The building is picturesquely sited against a backdrop of evergreen shrubbery in the boundary belt. It was designed in 1870 by William Smith of Trowbridge, who had earlier executed Davis' designs for the cemetery buildings. A further late C19 mausoleum (listed grade II) is situated c 95m south-east of the entrance against the backdrop of the boundary planting. The Romanesque-style segmental-shaped stone structure has a monumental round-arched central portal with timber doors ornamented with wrought-iron strapwork set beneath a tympanum containing wrought-iron spikes in the form of dragons. To each side blind arches contain armorial bronze memorial tablets commemorating the Rev Thomas Kingston (d 1867) and the Rev J D Hastings (d 1869), together with other members of their families. The mausoleum is approached by stone steps descending from the level of the cemetery, and is set behind a series of stone bollards ornamented with incised crosses which formerly supported chains. This structure also was designed by William Smith of Trowbridge. Some 50m north-east of the entrance a third mausoleum is constructed in pink granite with a central dome set on a square base flanked by four further, smaller domes. The round-arched entrance in the east facade is closed by fine panelled bronze doors, and is approached by a

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**TROWBRIDGE GENERAL CEMETERY**

flight of granite steps which descends from the cemetery to reach a granite-walled enclosure extending the width of the eastern side of the mausoleum. Access to the steps is closed by a pair of wide, low bronze gates bearing the inscription, 'I have the keys of Death and Hades'. This mausoleum was constructed c 1900 by Sir Roger Brown in memory of his wife (VCH 1953). Its design has been attributed to A S Goodridge (Brooks 1989).

In addition to the three mausolea, the cemetery contains a good collection of C19 and early-C20 monuments, particularly in the western sections of the site and around the chapels. These include the Clark family monument (listed grade II), designed and built by William Smith of Trowbridge, c 50m south-west of the entrance, an elaborate stone Gothic-style canopy surmounting a red granite cruciform sarcophagus commemorating Thomas Clark (d 1859), enclosed within a low box hedge. Immediately north-east of the Brown mausoleum at the north-west corner of the site, an arch composed of heavily vermiculated rustic stones commemorates members of the Mann family; this memorial was constructed c 1890 (inscription). Some 185m east of the entrance a tall, crocketed stone spire partly enclosed by mid or late-C19 cast-iron railings (all listed grade II) is picturesquely placed against the northern boundary planting; erected in memory of the Kemp family, this monument was constructed in the mid or late C19. A tall, late-C19 gabled stone cross (listed grade II) set with bronze memorial plaques commemorating the Tayler family is placed immediately south-east of the south chapel beneath the branches of a mature oak tree. Other significant monuments are placed parallel with the southern boundary, with the planting forming a backdrop. These include a stone sarcophagus in memory of Eliza Sylvester (d 1862) set within an enclosure marked by stone bollards and railings, and several late-C19 marble angels.

#### REFERENCES

Victoria History of the County of Wiltshire VII, (1953), 152 Rogers K, The Book of Trowbridge (1984), 118 Brooks C, Mortal Remains (1989), 178 Brooks C, English Historic Cemeteries, (English Heritage Theme Study 1994), 70

Maps Davis C E, Design for unconsecrated Chapel Trowbridge Cemetery, 1854 (G15/207/2), (Wiltshire County Record Office) [Plan and elevation of Nonconformist chapel, with Lord Palmerston's approval of the design, dated 5 January 1855.] Davis C E, Trowbridge Cemetery, c 1856 (G15/207/1L), (Wiltshire County Record Office) [Large plan showing grave plots; title and signature pasted over with paper.] Snailum, Huggins & Le Furre, Plan and Report on the Scheme for Renovation of the Cemetery Chapel, Trowbridge, October 1952 (G15/207/3), (Wiltshire County Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1926 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1884 2nd edition revised 1899, published 1901 3rd edition revised 1922, published 1924 1936 edition

Archival items Trowbridge Burial Board Minutes, 1854-78 (G15/200/1), (Wiltshire County Record Office) Cemetery work accounts, 1859-70 (G15/206/2), (Wiltshire County Record Office)

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

\* A good example of an early High Victorian (1855) public cemetery for a small provincial town in informal Picturesque style by the local architect CE Davis of Bath. \* The Gothic structures, also by Davis, form a notable ensemble and include lodge, gateway and two chapels. \* The design pivots around an axial drive which divides the consecrated and unconsecrated sections which are laid out with a serpentine pattern of paths. \* An exceptional collection of three mausolea is scattered around the perimeter together with several other notable memorials, unusual in a modest provincial cemetery serving a rural area. \* Two of the mausolea are of unusual Romanesque design with marked stylistic similarities and are picturesquely sited against a backdrop of evergreen shrubbery in the boundary belt. \* Social interest is expressed in an artistic variety of C19 monuments including many local worthies. \* The cemetery layout and structures survive intact and in good condition, with notable survival of C19 planting including an avenue of Irish yew along the axial drive.

Description written: November 2001 Register Inspector: JML Edited: December 2009

## Legal

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