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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SHEFFIELD GENERAL CEMETERY

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Name:	SHEFFIELD GENERAL CEMETERY
District:	Sheffield (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.368956 Longitude: -1.4877768 National Grid Reference: SK 34180 85910 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001391 Date first listed: 22-Jul-1998

Details

Cemetery of 1836 designed by Sheffield architect Samuel Worth (fl.1830) with a chapel, catacombs and a cemetery office, and a layout which makes dramatic use of a quarried hillside site. An extension of 1846 for Anglican burials is thought to have been laid out by Robert Marnock (1800-89).

CHRONOLOGY OF HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Sheffield General Cemetery Company was set up in response to overcrowding and poor conditions in Sheffield churchyards, exacerbated by a cholera epidemic in 1832. The Company bought the site for use by Nonconformists in 1836 for £1,900. Stone for the chapel, offices and gateways was quarried from the site. In 1846 the Anglicans negotiated with the Company to extend the cemetery and in 1850 c3ha attached to the east side of the existing site was consecrated by the Archbishop of York. Leading figures from Sheffield's C19 industrial, political, religious and business circles were buried in the Cemetery and by the mid C20 more than 77,000 interments had taken place. In 1963 the Company sold a majority of the shares to a development company and the site subsequently passed to Sheffield City Council. The Cemetery was closed as a burial ground by Act of Parliament in 1979. In the early 1980s the Anglican part of the site was largely cleared of gravestones and the area dedicated as a public park.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Cemetery is situated c2km south-west of Sheffield City Centre on land which rises steeply to the south from the River Porter. The c5.5ha site is in a residential area and is bounded by Cemetery Road on the south side, where there is a stone wall with sections of railings alternating with sections of full-height wall. Montague Street forms the eastern boundary, which is walled, and on the northern side a stone wall divides the site from the River Porter. The west side of the site is bounded by the sheer walls of the quarry from which building stone was extracted. The registered site includes Cemetery Avenue which runs south to the main entrance from Ecclesall Road and was laid out to give access to the site.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance is from Cemetery Avenue, laid out as a formal approach, with obelisks (removed in 1926) marking the point at which it left Ecclesall Road. The street is lined with rowan trees at various stages of maturity continuing a planting scheme which was initiated in the C19. Both the 1851 and 1890 OS maps show the route planted with trees and leading across open fields. The Avenue leads to a Classical gateway flanked by lodges (by Samuel Worth, 1836, listed grade II) which acts as a bridge over the River Porter and can be seen from the top of the road forming

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the terminus of a vista. The principal entrance from Cemetery Road, on the south side of the site, is an Egyptian style stone archway (1836, listed grade II), also designed by Worth, with a splayed opening beneath a coved cornice with a winged sun motif. Another entrance with iron gates leads to the Anglican Chapel from Cemetery Road. There is also an entrance marked by simple stone gatepiers on Montague Street.

OTHER LAND The Cemetery consists of two distinct areas, the Anglican Cemetery on the east side, largely cleared of monuments, and to the west the original Nonconformist Cemetery which retains the majority of its monuments.

The Cemetery Avenue entrance leads to a path running southwards which divides, with one part running east along the base of a retaining wall, c5m high which fronts catacombs entered from splayed entrances. This wall is surmounted by a concrete parapet and balustrade of C20 date. A secondary row of catacombs immediately to the south runs parallel to the first, and a path at its base continues eastwards into the Anglican section. The other branch of the path, which is the main route from the entrance, takes a curving approach south-eastwards along the top of the catacombs, and the three buildings of the site can be seen amongst trees on higher ground as this path is followed.

The path continues and leads to a series of three semicircular terraces with stone retaining walls set into the slope on the site of the quarry. The focal point of the design is a chapel (1836 by Samuel Worth, listed grade II*) with a portico of fluted Doric columns and splayed Egyptian style window openings. This is positioned at the centre of the Nonconformist area overlooking a semicircular terrace with central steps leading down to the north. The chapel is set into the slope with a semicircular retaining wall and bank south of which is another higher semicircular terrace with a stone retaining wall. On the highest part of the site, directly overlooking the terraces and aligned with the chapel, is the former Cemetery Office (listed grade II), also in Graeco-Egyptian style and designed by Worth. This is now (1997) called Montague House and is in use as private offices. There are extensive long distance views to the north from the chapel which overlooks the valley of the Porter and rising land beyond.

The strongly formal design controlled by the buildings and terraces is softened by the curving paths which follow circuitous routes up the slope affording views of the buildings and the more prominent monuments in changing relationships with one another. The site is planted with a variety of trees, with mature examples of weeping trees including weeping holly and ash. An early C19 view of the cemetery shows mature trees suggesting that existing tree cover was incorporated when the site was laid out.

The Anglican (east) side of the site is thought to have been laid out by Robert Marnock (Brooks, 1989) who designed the nearby Sheffield Botanical Gardens (q.v.). The principal building is a cemetery chapel of 1848 (listed grade II) designed by William Flockton which lies close to the midpoint of the southern side of the site where the Anglican side is divided from the Nonconformist side. The two parts of the site were divided by a wall, called the Dissenter's Wall, but this has largely disappeared and the layout of the Anglican side links with the other side by means of an axial terraced walk which runs eastwards as a continuation of the terraced walkway in front (to the north) of the Nonconformist Chapel. This path is planted as a mixed avenue of broadleaf trees. The 1851 OS map shows the route but not the trees and the 1891 OS shows trees along the northern side only. There are isolated groups of monuments in the area south of the avenue and alongside the southern and eastern perimeter walls. A perimeter path leads around the site and links with a path leading alongside the catacombs on the north side of the site and with paths leading from the main entrance on the south side.

REFERENCES

Published Sources N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire the West Riding*, 1967 pp 61, 459 C. Brooks, *Mortal Remains*, 1989, p174-5 *A Tour Guide to The General Cemetery*, n.d., c1995, Friends of Sheffield General Cemetery. *Sheffield's Historic Parks and Gardens*, UDP Background Paper No.4, 1997, no pagination.

Maps OS 6":1 mile, surveyed 1851 OS 5":1 mile, surveyed 1851 OS 25":1 mile, 1890

Archival J.D. Sewell, *Register Review of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest in South Yorkshire*, 1995, English Heritage Files.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Sheffield 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 Samuel Worth, which employed imposing architectural structures, including a chapel, catacombs and

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a cemetery gateway in the form of a triumphal arch set conspicuously overlooking Sheffield in a layout which makes dramatic use of a quarried hillside site. * An extension of 1846 for Anglican burials is thought to have been laid out by the notable landscape designer Robert Marnock. * The historic core of the site survives largely complete although with the removal of some monuments. * Local and national social interest is expressed in the range of burials and a rich variety of artistically notable 19th century monuments including many Sheffield worthies.

Description amended: September 1998 Register Inspector: C. Hartwell 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.