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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BELPER CEMETERY

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Name:	BELPER CEMETERY
County:	Derbyshire
District:	Amber Valley (District Authority)
Parish:	Belper
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.037299 Longitude: -1.4773523 National Grid Reference: SK 35143 49019 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000201 Date first listed: 23-Jun-2003

Details

A cemetery opened in 1859 laid out by William Barron; the chapels and lodge designed by the Birmingham architect, Edward Holmes.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

An urgent need for more burial space prompted the formation of Belper Burial Board in May 1857. Two parcels of land, situated in Broadholm, an area to the north of Belper, were purchased at a cost of £120 per acre from Messrs Strutt whose family had initiated the industrialisation of the lower Derwent valley in the late-C18. Additionally, a narrow strip of land was purchased from Henry Harrison and Godfrey Litchfield, bringing the total area to c 15 acres (c 6ha) (Belper Burial Board Minute Book). The proposed cemetery would occupy a commanding location 'on an acclivity overlooking the Derwent' (Kelly 1887).

By the following November the plans of Edward Holmes, a Birmingham architect, had been selected for the cemetery buildings: a lodge and twin mortuary chapels, connected by a square tower and spire. At the same time William Barron (1800-91), who had been head gardener at Elvaston Castle (qv) since 1840, was approached to produce an estimate for the laying out and draining of the proposed cemetery. Barron had recently been involved in the laying out of Nottingham Road Cemetery (qv) in Derby. While Edward Holmes decided on the position of the Cemetery chapels, Barron advised on the layout of roads, planting, and draining and also the siting of the Cemetery lodge. Mr William Freeman of Belper was the builder. In March 1859, William Barron's planting plan was approved and on 16th June 1859 the land was consecrated. When the Cemetery opened in 1859, 1st, 2nd and 3rd class ground was designated for burial, the 1st class ground largely situated in the highest part of the Cemetery (Minute Book).

In 1895 Belper Urban District Council acquired the Cemetery (Kelly 1936). Towards the end of the C19 the cemetery was extended to the south-east, and further extensions occurred during the C20. The cemetery is currently (2003) managed by Amber Valley Borough Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Belper Cemetery is situated c 1.5km north of the centre of Belper, on the valley slope of the River Derwent rising steeply to the east. The site here registered comprises c 6ha and is

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
BELPER CEMETERY

bounded on the west by the A6 trunk road (Matlock Road) by means of stone walls with prominent piers at regular intervals, the original railings now (2003) missing. To the north, the cemetery is bounded by a stone wall, a former field boundary, with open fields beyond. The boundary to the east is formed by a timber rail fence in the northern part, separating the original cemetery area from an area recently (late-C20) designated for woodland burial (outside the area here registered). The eastern boundary continues southwards as a curved stone boundary wall beyond which lies Spinney Wood (outside the area here registered) and then as a stone retaining wall with a line of yew trees planted immediately west. The southern boundary is formed by a stone boundary wall, a former field boundary, and a line of mature holly specimens which, at the western end of the boundary, becomes less distinct. The south boundary meets the west boundary at a stone pier, c 70m south of the main entrance. Excellent views are afforded from many parts of the cemetery, to the north-west, west and south-west, now (2003) in some parts obscured by mature, and predominantly evergreen, tree and shrub growth.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Belper Cemetery is approached from the west on Matlock Road and from Cemetery Road, a road which adjoins Matlock Road south of the cemetery. The main entrance, located central to the west boundary of the site here registered, comprises a carriage entrance with gate piers (c 1859) and double gates (C20) with a single pedestrian entrance immediately south with gate piers (c 1859) and single gate (C20). The cemetery lodge (c 1859) stands immediately inside the cemetery entrance on the north side. There is a minor pedestrian entrance from the south-east corner linking with a footpath which runs through Spinney Wood.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS The cemetery chapels (1859, Edward Holmes, listed grade II), in Decorated Gothic style, are situated on an elevated terrace high above the lodge, 80m east of the main entrance. The north chapel, formerly the Nonconformist chapel, is connected to an identical south chapel, the Anglican chapel, by a central arch or porte cochère above which is a square tower with a tall broach spire, the whole forming an impressive symmetrical group and local landmark.

OTHER LAND The layout of the cemetery is at once elegant and practical, maximising the potential of the steep site. A simple oval arrangement of carriage drives connects the main entrance to the cemetery chapels, a layout which potentially provides separate access to each chapel while overcoming the steep gradient. East of the chapels, the ground continues to rise steeply and is served by a symmetrical arrangement of curvilinear routes, one concave and one convex, which span the full width of the cemetery from north to south. These are linked by two straight diagonal routes which intersect at the centre. A particularly fine and abundant mature collection of mixed plantings, predominantly evergreen, exploiting a range of effects - including avenues, individual specimens, and groupings of contrasting form and texture - combine with the varied layout and dramatic views to create a landscape which provides privacy and enclosure as well as interest and excitement.

Some 10m east of the main entrance the drive divides, with mature yew and hollies screening the view beyond. Curvilinear drives lead uphill to the north and south. The drive to the north is lined by mature yew specimens and, 65m north-east of the main entrance, it passes a short route which leads north to a former workshop (C19), now derelict. The drive terminates at the wide forecourt in front of the cemetery chapels, 70m east of the main entrance. From the forecourt there are good views across the area of burial west of the chapels. This wide oval area, sloping fairly steeply downhill, is crowded with dense groupings of monuments, grave stones and memorials with grave surrounds. Beyond the burial area, which is surrounded by mature evergreens, there are good views to the west across the River Derwent and the landscape beyond.

A few metres north of the cemetery chapels a curvilinear drive leads uphill to the north-east, enclosed on both sides by dense plantings of mature evergreen trees and shrubs. Groups of headstones and occasional monuments stand in glades within the plantings. The curvilinear drive leads to a corner, 80m north-east of the cemetery chapels, formed by a wide circle in the drive and framed by a variety of evergreen trees and shrubs. A particularly fine mature specimen of *Cedrus atlantica* stands adjacent to the corner, and close to the north boundary wall. From the corner, the drive takes a sharp turn and continues in a straight diagonal line uphill to the south-south-east. Here the drive is lined on either side by mature yew trees and dense plantings of various trees and shrubs, predominantly evergreen. The drive leads to the crossing point of the two diagonal routes (OS 1874), 60m east of the cemetery chapels.

Immediately east of the crossing point a narrow flight of stone steps leads steeply uphill to the east, providing a more direct route to the highest part of the cemetery. From the crossing point itself one of the drives leads uphill to the north-east, lined by

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
BELPER CEMETERY

an avenue of mature yew trees with interspersed groups of headstones and monuments, and continues to a corner, formed as a wide circle in the drive, situated close to the north boundary wall. The drive takes a sharp turn to the south-east and ascends in a curvilinear line to reach what was the highest point in the cemetery in the original layout (OS 1884), c 140m east of the cemetery chapels. From here the richness of the tree collection can be fully appreciated with fine views down to the west across the cemetery. Many of the taller evergreen trees channel views to the north-west, west and south-west in the landscape beyond. Also visible to the south-west is the massive red-brick landmark of East Mill, built in 1912-13.

From this former highest part of the cemetery a path with ramped steps leads east into the area of the first extension of the cemetery (OS 1900). Some 200m east-south-east, the path joins a straight drive leading south-west, bounded on the east by a stone retaining wall in front of which is a line of mature yew trees, which form part of the eastern boundary of the section of the cemetery here registered. Beyond and east of this is an area of burial (outside the area here registered) which reaches towards the edges of Spinney Wood to the east. At the southern end of the drive there is a circular area, edged by mature hollies and ornamental rockwork. From here the drive turns sharply and gradually descends to the north-west, curvilinear in line, with a more open aspect and excellent views to the north-west, to join the curvilinear drive marking the highest point in the cemetery in the original layout (OS 1884). After a sharp bend, the curvilinear drive descends to the south-west, the ground descending steeply from here, the downslope end of graves built up to accommodate the steep gradient. Here specimen trees abound, notably some fine *Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata'.

The curvilinear drive descends to join the straight diagonal drive, 120m south-east of the cemetery chapels, again marked by a wide circle at the junction. During the C20 the cemetery was extended south from here with the diagonal drive itself extended southwards to give access to that extension (outside the area here registered). Descending north-west on the straight diagonal drive, an avenue of common yew, *Taxus baccata*, lines the drive and from the drive there are views to the north-east across burial areas in the upper reaches of the cemetery, these views framed by groups of specimen trees and shrubs. From the crossing point of the straight diagonal drives, the drive takes a sharp turn to descend towards the south-west and another sharp bend, marked by a particularly fine specimen of *Fagus sylvatica* 'Pendula', standing 90m south of the cemetery chapels. From here the drive, now curvilinear, descends towards the south facade of the cemetery chapels, lined by common yews to either side. From the southern end of the chapel building, a steep curvilinear drive descends; more open in aspect than the equivalent drive serving the north chapel, this provides views across the oval burial area west of the chapels and to the north-east towards the front facade of the chapel building, the views framed by a particularly fine and varied tree collection, predominantly evergreen, on the rising ground beyond. The drive continues to the north-west, passing a path leading south towards an area of cremation memorials (outside the area here registered), to return to the main entrance.

The cemetery contains a particularly fine collection of specimen trees and shrubs, many of which date from the establishment of the cemetery in the mid-C19.

It is located within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage site.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Belper Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Belper Cemetery is a High Victorian cemetery (1859) laid out for a Burial Board. * The layout and planting of the cemetery was designed by the noted designer William Barron (1800-91), head gardener at Elvaston Castle (qv) and advisor on planting at Nottingham Road Cemetery, Derby (1855, qv). * The cemetery lodge and paired chapels were designed by the Birmingham architect Edward Holmes. * The layout of the cemetery skilfully exploits the steeply sloping site to create picturesque views from the cemetery, and of the cemetery from surrounding areas. * The layout of the cemetery, including its associated structures and much original planting of the highest quality, survives intact.

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 14/11/2011

Legal

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
BELPER CEMETERY

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.

Bibliographie

Books and journals

Jewell, R (ed), *Memory Lane: Belper, Ambergate & District*, (1998), 69

Other

Belper Burial Board Minute Book, 1857-81 (D1395 U9102), (Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock)

Kelly, *Directory of Derbyshire* (1887), 37

Kelly, *Directory of Derbyshire* (1936), 54

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1879, published 1880

OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1898, published 1900

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1877-9, published 1884

OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1898, published 1901

OS 6" to 1 mile: 3rd revised 1913, published 1921

Plan of the Township of Belper in the Parish of Duffield and the County of Derby, 6 chains to an inch, 1844 (Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock)