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*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ST SEPULCHRE'S CEMETERY

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Name:	ST SEPULCHRE'S CEMETERY
County:	Oxfordshire
District:	Oxford (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.761194 Longitude: -1.2692469 National Grid Reference: SP 50531 07198 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001682 Date first listed: 26-Jan-2004

## Details

A mid-C19 parochial cemetery for which H J Underwood designed a chapel, and E G Bruton an entrance gateway and lodge.  
HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1843 a committee reported to the Local Board on the condition of churchyards in the City of Oxford. It was noted that these predominantly medieval burial grounds were full, and that the condition of St Ebbe's churchyard was offensive to passers-by, while at St Aldate's, opposite Christ Church College, the ground was so full of bodies that before excavating a new grave it was necessary to test the ground with an iron rod (VCH 1979).

The opposition of the City clergy prevented progress towards the establishment of a general cemetery, but in 1847-8 land was acquired in the Osney, Holywell, and Jericho districts of the city for the establishment of new parochial burial grounds. These were duly consecrated in 1848 (ibid).

The burial ground in Jericho, known as St Sepulchre's Cemetery, was laid out on land behind properties fronting Walton Street, with a formal avenue leading to a gothic gatehouse and lodge designed by E G Bruton. A curving drive led through the cemetery to a Norman-style chapel, designed by the Oxford architect, H J Underwood (Pevsner 1974). Underwood also designed chapels for Holywell Cemetery, and Osney Cemetery. In 1865 Lucy's Iron Foundry, later the Eagle Foundry, was established to the north-west of the site, between the cemetery and the Oxford Canal, while the land to the north and south was gradually developed with domestic properties (Hoggar, 1850; OS 1872).

Further burials in the city churchyards were prevented by an Order in Council issued in 1855, but by 1876 the parochial burial grounds, particularly Osney and St Sepulchre's, were rapidly becoming full. Ratepayers and the Medical Officer of Health petitioned for the establishment of a general cemetery, and in the same year, 1876, the Local Board was constituted a Burial Board. After protracted negotiations, three sites were purchased for new general cemeteries in 1889-90 (VCH 1979).

The mid-C19 parochial cemeteries continued in intermittent use until the mid-C20, St Sepulchre's Cemetery being closed for new burials c 1950 and vested in the care of the City Council. The chapel was demolished c 1970 and replaced by a paved area with seating (Pevsner 1974). Today (2003), St Sepulchre's Cemetery remains municipal property.

DESCRIPTION

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**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** St Sepulchre's Cemetery is situated c 0.75km north-west of the centre of Oxford, to the south-west of the junction of Walton Street and Walton Well Road. The cemetery, which extends to c 1ha, is approximately rectangular on plan, and is enclosed to the north-east, north-west, and south-east by stone walls, and to the south-south-east by late-C20 brick walls surmounted by metal railings. To the north-west and south-west the walls separate the site from the Eagle Foundry, while to the south-east the cemetery is adjoined by the gardens of late-C19 domestic properties in Juxon Street. To the north-east the site is adjoined by C19 domestic and commercial premises fronting on to Walton Street, while to the south-south-east the cemetery is adjoined by late-C20 flats. The site slopes gently from north-east to south-west, but the surrounding buildings preclude wider views.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** St Sepulchre's Cemetery is approached from Walton Street to the north-east, at a point c 40m north-west of the junction of Walton Street and Juxon Street. The entrance from Walton Street comprises a pair of massive, mid-C19 cast-iron carriage gates supported by cast-iron piers with cross finials. The gates are set between adjacent C19 commercial properties, and provide access to a drive which leads c 50m south-west, through an avenue of mature limes bordered by brick walls enclosing adjacent gardens, to reach the mid-C19 gothic gatehouse. The gatehouse comprises a gothic arch closed by wrought-iron gates, surmounted by a gabled superstructure, which is attached to the mid-C19 gothic lodge which stands immediately north-west of the entrance. The gatehouse and lodge were constructed to the design of E G Bruton in 1848 and appear to have formed part of the original scheme for the cemetery, although they are not marked on Hoggar's Plan of Oxford of 1850. Bruton was assistant to H J Underwood, architect of the cemetery chapel, and succeeded to his practice when Underwood died in 1852 (Colvin 1995).

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The single Church of England mortuary chapel was situated c 50m west-north-west of the gatehouse on the central north-east to south-west axis of the site, but slightly north-east of the central point of the cemetery. The building was apsidal on plan and constructed in a neo-Norman style, to the design of H J Underwood, in 1848 (ibid). The chapel was demolished c 1970, its site being laid out as a paved area with ornamental shrubbery and seating areas.

Underwood was a noted Gothic Revival architect, designing, among many other commissions, Littlemore church, Oxford for J H (later Cardinal) Newman in 1835-6, and St Paul's church, Walton Street, Oxford in 1836. Underwood was responsible for designing chapels at all three of the parochial cemeteries established at Oxford in 1848, using different architectural styles for each building (ibid). The designs were published by the architect in 1849 (Underwood 1849). None of these chapels survives today.

**OTHER LAND** From the gatehouse, a wide carriage drive sweeps west and north-west through the eastern quarter of the cemetery to reach the site of the west entrance to the chapel which is now laid out as a late-C20 seating area. Here, the drive broadens to form a small terrace, from which there are views south-west across the lower areas of the cemetery. The drive is flanked by mature yews, beneath which is set an impressive group of mid and late-C19 funerary monuments. From the terrace west of the site of the chapel, two parallel straight walks extend south-west through the site towards the south-west boundary, where a further walk extends across the full width of the site, linking the two parallel walks and providing a circulation route around the lower section of the cemetery. The lower section of the cemetery is planted with scattered evergreen shrubs, specimen Irish yews, and mature deciduous trees. The southern walk is lined with mature beech trees, while the northern walk is lined with mature horse chestnuts. A curvilinear grass walk sweeps north-west and north from the chapel terrace to provide access to the burial areas north and north-east of the site of the chapel; these areas are similarly planted with mature trees and evergreen shrubs.

The path pattern within the cemetery corresponds closely to that shown on Hoggar's Plan of Oxford (1850), and on the 1st edition OS map of 1872. Much of the surviving planting also appears to be of mid-C19 origin and may be assumed to reflect the original layout of the cemetery.

The cemetery contains a good, representative collection of mid and late-C19 monuments, generally arranged in rows among the specimen trees and shrubs, together with several monuments of particular interest. Among the leading figures from the C19 City and University commemorated in the cemetery are Benjamin Jowett (1817-93), Regius Professor of Greek 1855-93 and Master of Balliol College 1870-93, whose monument is situated c 20m north-east of the site of the chapel, and Thomas

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Combe, manager of the Oxford University Press and benefactor of St Barnabas' church, Jericho. To the north of the site of the chapel, a rectangular area enclosed by stone kerbs marks the burial place of the Sisters of the Society of the Holy Trinity and their foundress, Marian Rebecca Hughes (d 1912), sister of Thomas Hughes (1822-96), author of Tom Brown's Schooldays (1856). In the north-west quarter of the cemetery, a monumental cross commemorates Addington R P Venables, Bishop of Nassau, West Indies, while in the same area, two terracotta headstones ornamented with reliefs and manufactured by Grimsley of Oxford survive from the last quarter of the C19. In the south-west quarter of the cemetery, a headstone ornamented with a relief of a limousine commemorates Francis Taylor, who was killed 'in fulfilment of his duty' as a chauffeur in 1934.

REFERENCES

Underwood H J, Oxford Parish Burial Ground Chapels (1849) Pevsner N, The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire (1974), 325 Victoria History of the County of Oxfordshire IV, (1979), 364 Brooks C, Mortal Remains (1989), 172 Colvin H, A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840 (3rd edn 1995), 1001-02

Maps R S Hoggar, Plan of Oxford, 1850

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1872, published 1880 2nd edition published 1912 1938 edition

Archival items Vestry Minutes for the Parish of St Paul, 1837-93 (Oxfordshire Record Office)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION St Sepulchre's Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* St Sepulchre's Cemetery is a High Victorian parochial cemetery (1848) laid out to serve the parish of Jericho in the city of Oxford. \* The cemetery is one of a group of three contemporary cemeteries established to address the overcrowded nature of the parish churchyards. \* The cemetery retains distinguished associated structures including a lodge and entrance gates designed by E G Bruton in 1848. \* The cemetery contains a good collection of C19 funerary monuments, including memorials to prominent members of the University, and to the Sisters of the Holy Trinity, a mid-C19 Anglican religious community. \* The layout of the cemetery survives substantially intact, together with some apparently original planting.

Description written: April 2003 Register Inspector: JML Edited: 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.