

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

LISTER LANE CEMETERY

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Name:	LISTER LANE CEMETERY
District:	Calderdale (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.722816 Longitude: -1.8737695 National Grid Reference: SE 08427 25164 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001366 Date first listed: 18-Mar-2003

Details

A cemetery opened in 1841 by the Halifax General Cemetery Company.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In May 1836 an advertisement appeared in the Halifax Express convening a meeting to form a cemetery company; by the following November the constitution had been agreed. The Halifax General Cemetery Company was the outcome of an enterprise by three local businessmen, Jonathon Akroyd (1782-1847), manufacturer and a prominent New Connexion Methodist, Richard Kershaw, gentleman, and Ely Bates, merchant (Dell and Billson 2003). It was formed in response to overcrowding in the existing burial grounds within the town. The company offered 500 shares to be sold at £5 each, £1000 of which would go towards the purchase of land for the new cemetery (ibid). The site selected was two closes of land, an area of approximately 3 acres (c 1.2ha), owned by Joseph and George Whitely, situated between Maiden or Gibbet Lane and Lister Lane, on the western outskirts of Halifax, well away from the town centre (Deed of Settlement, 1842).

The cemetery founders wanted not only a safe and hygienic place of burial but also a cemetery whose design and buildings would contribute to the improvement and respectability of the town. In 1839, James Day, a local land agent and surveyor, was commissioned to survey the proposed site, assess the depth of rock, and produce a design for the layout of walks and the position of the chapel. Roger Ives, a local architect who came to be responsible for the design of some later developments in the area including West Hill Park, a philanthropic housing project, and the Sir Francis Crossley Almshouses, together with William Bull, another local architect, and James Day are all known to have presented plans for the design of the chapel in October 1839. Approximately £1845 was paid to construct the burial ground, chapel, and lodge (Dell and Billson 2003).

The cemetery opened in August 1841 and was intended for use by all religious denominations (Deed of Settlement, 1842). Research into burial charges in London, Manchester, and Leeds as well as all the existing burial grounds in Halifax, ensured that the company offered competitive rates for burial in the new cemetery, making it affordable by all. While many wealthy and important people in the history of Halifax were subsequently buried in the cemetery, the 1881 census also reveals the ordinary people interred there, such as a carpet setter, woolstapler, insurance agent, and shopkeeper (Dell and Billson 2003). The creation of the cemetery was the first in a series of developments in the locality in the mid to late C19. These included the building of Belle Vue, the mansion of the Crossley family who owned a large carpet manufacturing business; the Sir Francis Crossley Almshouses; West Hill Park; middle-class housing; churches; and, to the south, People's Park (qv) (ibid).

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With the opening of Stoney Royd Cemetery by Halifax Corporation in the early 1860s, south-east of the town centre, and a gradual reduction in burials throughout the early-C20, business started to decline. By the mid-C20 the chapel was in disuse and boarded-up against vandalism. The monumental mason's yard had ceased to trade and was sold off. The cemetery was acquired by the former Halifax County Borough Council in July 1952 (Stables 1981). Around the mid 1960s the cemetery was closed for burial and in the late 1970s, the lodge was demolished. Some clearance of the eastern half of the cemetery took place during improvements made in the 1980s (Dell and Billson 2003). The Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery were formed in 2000. The cemetery is currently (2003) owned and managed by Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Lister Lane Cemetery is situated c 1km west of the centre of Halifax on elevated land rising gently to the west. The roughly square site, which occupies an area of c 1.2ha, lies within an area of mid to late C19 development, predominantly residential. Gibbet Street, formerly Gibbet Lane, forms the north boundary defined by a c 2.1m high stone wall, partly retaining, with triangular coping. On the north side of Gibbet Street lies West Hill Park, built in the mid to late C19, currently residential with some commercial. At its western end the north boundary wall increases in height to join the high stone wall with rounded coping, c 2.4m high and partly retaining, defining the western boundary of the cemetery. Immediately beyond the west boundary lie the grounds of a late-C20 housing development on Francis Street. At the south end of the west boundary the gable end of housing (late-C19) forms part of the boundary. The south boundary, along Lister Lane, is formed by a c 2m high dressed sandstone wall with triangular coping, which in part acts as a retaining wall. Opposite the cemetery on the south side of Lister Lane are the high boundary walls and lodge of Belle Vue and its extensive grounds, a C19 mansion now (2003) in use as offices. To the east lies the northern end of Crossley's Almshouses. Belle Vue Place, a pedestrian route linking Lister Lane and Gibbet Street, forms the east boundary of the cemetery which is defined by a stone wall with rounded coping, partly retaining. Beyond this boundary lie the gardens of residential properties (late-C20) and a mosque with adjoining car park (late-C20).

As part of the original layout, the slightly higher, western half of the cemetery was terraced and separated from the lower, eastern part by retaining walls and steps. Thus from the western half, particularly from the edge of the terrace, there are good views to the east across the centre of Halifax and to the rising moors beyond.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the cemetery is near the western end of the south boundary on Lister Lane. To either side concave boundary walls create a slight recessed forecourt, with original cobbles visible. The entrance is formed by three stone gate piers containing a carriage entrance and pair of gates and, immediately to the west, a pedestrian entrance with a single gate. Almost symmetrically opposite, on the northern boundary on Gibbet Street and situated 100m north of the main entrance, is a similar entrance, for carriages only, with concave boundary walls, slight recessed forecourt, two gate piers, and a pair of gates. It is thought that hearses arriving through the Gibbet Street gates would deposit the bier for the funeral service and then leave through the Lister Lane gates (ibid). A pedestrian entrance (late-C20) with a single gate, situated at the southern end of Belle Vue Place, 80m east of the main entrance in the south-east corner of the cemetery, gives ascending access to the cemetery via a flight of stone steps.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS The mortuary chapel (early to mid C19, listed grade II) stands in an elevated central focal position, its west wall at the centre of and forming part of the west boundary of the cemetery, 50m north-west of the main entrance. The chapel is a small stone building, in Greek style with Doric pilasters, a pedimented east front, and a slated roof. It is approached by steps on its east side. Crypts, created in the cellar of the chapel and incorporating space for burial, were never used (ibid). Following the recent collapse of the chapel roof, it is currently (2003) surrounded by temporary fencing, for safety and security reasons.

OTHER LAND The layout of the cemetery is simple and formal. It is laid out symmetrically about a central axis linking from west to east, incorporating the mortuary chapel and a central walk leading to a broad flight of stone steps. The steps form the central feature in a terrace which separates a higher level to the west, occupied by the chapel and dominated by a dense collection of fine monuments, from a lower level in the eastern half of the cemetery, distinguished by gravestones and in many cases the absence of grave surrounds and a more open character. A path which formerly extended the axis east from the steps is

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at present (2003) largely overgrown and difficult to discern, as is an adjoining path which formerly connected north and south to a perimeter path linking the outer edges of the cemetery (OS 1852).

Immediately west of and inside the main entrance, an area of grass indicates the former position of the cemetery lodge, now (2003) gone. The former stonemason's yard, situated 20m west of the main entrance (outside the area here registered), is now occupied by two garages and garage forecourts. From the entrance a wide carriage drive leads gently uphill to the north-west towards the mortuary chapel. On either side of the drive stand fine collections of tall elaborate monuments, densely grouped and with grave surrounds intact. On the west side of the drive, groups of monuments stand on two levels, access made by cobbled, ramped steps (C19). Immediately east of the chapel the carriage drive becomes wider, forming a broad forecourt. From here, a wide path, paved in flagstones (C20), leads east, flanked on either side by dense rows of tall monuments and grave surrounds. It is known that brick vaults were constructed underground in this upper part of the cemetery. It is also thought that an extra row of burial spaces was added (early C20) on the north side of the walk (Dell and Billson 2003). Some 35m east of the chapel, the walk continues to a wide flight of stone steps, the central feature in a terrace defined by stone retaining walls running from north to south. To either side of the central flight of stone steps, at the corner of the retaining walls, stand tall stone pedestals surmounted by elegant solid stone urns. Descending the steps, 40m east of the chapel and immediately to the north and south are two chambers, constructed within the retaining walls and under the terrace. Each chamber has a metal gate at its entrance and houses stone shelving to either side of a central passage; it is thought that these may have been used to store coffins before burial (ibid). The retaining walls to either side are topped by substantial stone copings, now (2003) partly missing on the south side. In contrast to the high density of monuments on the upper level, the area east of and below the terrace is more open in character, dominated by rows of gravestones, more widely spaced. During the 1980s, some clearance of this part of the cemetery was carried out for ease of maintenance, leaving only some evidence of grave surrounds. This area of the cemetery is at present (2003) partly overgrown.

From the chapel, the wide carriage drive continues north from the forecourt to the northern cemetery entrance, a fine and dense collection of monuments flanking either side of the drive. Some 40m north of the chapel and immediately west of the northern entrance, a mature planting group including holly and rhododendrons may be a remnant of an original planting scheme (OS 1852). From the carriage drive an informal path leads east, running parallel to the northern boundary wall, at a higher level than the pavement level on Gibbet Road. The alignment of the path has altered from that seen on an early OS map (OS 1852). The views from this part of the cemetery are dominated by the mosque to the east and the buildings of Belle Vue and Crossley's Almshouses to the south-east. The perimeter path continues to the north-east corner of the cemetery where mature holly and rhododendron specimens suggest evidence of an original planting scheme (OS 1852). As the perimeter path proceeds to the south, roughly parallel to the east boundary, the alignment remains similar to that seen on the early OS map (1852). The cemetery ground level along the east boundary is above that of the adjacent road and in the south-east corner, steps descend giving access to Belle Vue Place. The path continues west, parallel to the south boundary and above the ground level on Lister Lane and gently descends to return to the main entrance. The alignment of the path has altered from that seen on the 1852 OS map.

REFERENCES

Stables J M, People's Park: Proposed Conservation Area, (Report for Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council, 1981), 4
Hargreaves JA, Halifax (1999), 152

Maps Myers J, Surveyor, Map of the Parish of Halifax in the West Riding of the County of York, 1834 (West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale, Halifax)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1849, published 1854 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1933 edition OS 5' to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1849, published 1852 OS 10' to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1889, published 1890

Archival items Deed of Settlement of the Halifax General Cemetery Company 1836 [published 31 December 1842] (West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale, Halifax) H Dell and K Billson, MS Research notes, February 2003 (copy on EH file)
Additional information Friends of Lister Lane Cemetery, Halifax (information from website, 2002)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Lister Lane Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * An early garden cemetery (1839-41) of the second decade of garden cemetery design, laid out by a private cemetery company to

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serve a provincial town. * It was designed by James Day, a local land agent and surveyor. * The site survives largely complete although with some neglect and damage. The focal chapel survives but is in poor condition. * It contains a notable range of catacombs incorporated into the change of level of the site as a viewing terrace. * The cemetery was the first in a series of mid to late C19 developments in the locality. These included the building of Belle Vue, the Crossley family mansion who owned a large carpet manufacturing business; the Sir Francis Crossley Almshouses; West Hill Park; middle-class housing; churches; and People's Park (qv). * Local social interest expressed in burials.

Description written: February 2003 Register Inspector: JS 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.