

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

MAGDALEN HILL CEMETERY

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Name:	MAGDALEN HILL CEMETERY
County:	Hampshire
District:	Winchester (District Authority)
Parish:	Chilcomb
National park:	SOUTH DOWNS
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.060651 Longitude: -1.2701093 National Grid Reference: SU 51247 29288 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000310 Date first listed: 18-Feb-2003

Details

An early-C20 Burial Board cemetery designed by Ernest White of Milner Son and White, with lodge by the City Surveyor, Walter Andersen.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1906 the Winchester City Burial Board were asked to consider new sites for the location of a cemetery to take over from the privately run West Hill Cemetery to the west of the city centre, which was almost full and in financial difficulties. Following extensive discussions concerning several possible sites, a 20 acre (c 8ha) site at Magdalen Hill (or Morn Hill as it was then known) was chosen. The land formed part of the Winchester Chapter Estates which belonged to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and it took two further years to overcome their objections and secure agreement for the sale which finally took place at the beginning of 1909. In May of that year the City Surveyor, Walter V Andersen, presented a report to the committee in which he proposed that the site be fenced 'across the downs with quickset inside and chestnut paling on the east, west and south sides', and that there should be 'a good permanent iron fence with entrance gates on the north side' (Burial Board Minutes). His plan was also 'To provide one chapel with suggested sites for two other chapels, and to lay out in a finished state six acres including the lodge, offices and conveniences, the remaining part of the 20 acres being laid out in skeleton that is to day the lines of the paths shewn only' (ibid). The proposed scheme was to cost £4089. The Burial Board continued to deliberate and in 1910 asked Andersen to present an altered scheme which left a place for just one chapel should it be required at a later date. In May 1911 a final general report was submitted to the Board, by Andersen and Mr White of the firm Messrs Milner Son and White, together with 'plans and estimates for the laying out of the new cemetery' (ibid). Letters in the Burial Board files record that White was appointed and his scheme was adopted. Work commenced and the cemetery opened at the end of 1914. A local newspaper cutting (undated) pasted into the Minute book at that date records that 'numerous ornamental beds have already been made and planted with shrubs and inside the whole of the fencing there is a plantation of trees and shrubs'.

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Sometime after 1932 the path layout in the cemetery was extended into the southern section which up to that time had been planted but not used. The site remains (2003) in active use as a cemetery under the management of the City Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Magdalen Hill Cemetery is located on the eastern edge of the city of Winchester, just outside the city boundary. The c 7ha site is enclosed by railings and occupies a commanding position on the hill above the city. The sloping ground rises from the road on the northern boundary to the southern boundary on the top of the downs. It is bounded on the west and the south by Magdalen Hill Down, by a caravan park to the east, and by the B3404 to the north. Its position offers expansive views over the surrounding countryside in every direction apart from the south, although the eastern view is now (2003) cut short by a late-C20 business development.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are two entrances into the cemetery, both off the B3404 to the north. Black iron railings with occasional gold finials run along the northern boundary, at the western end of which lies the main entrance. Here large iron gates with gold detail hang on square brick piers with knapped flint panels, surmounted by stone ball finials. Immediately to the south-west of the entrance stands the lodge, a flint building with red-brick dressings under a slate roof, built in 1912 to designs by Walter Andersen in a simplified Gothic style. The drive passes the lodge in the north-west corner of the cemetery, curves south and then east to the site reserved for the chapel and then continues north-east to exit at a second set of fine ornamental iron gates hung on brick gate piers with flint detail and stone capping at the eastern end of the north boundary.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The designers of Magdalen Hill cemetery were asked to provide a place for a chapel should it prove necessary, but it was never constructed. The level ground in the centre of the cemetery has since been used as a car park and area for cremation memorials.

OTHER LAND The layout of the northern half of the cemetery appears to be little altered since it was laid out. The network of paths forms a symmetrical pattern based on the curve of the main drive as it runs between each gate and up to the chapel site. From this a path runs in an oval laid out between the chapel site and the northern boundary. Originally the path included a circular bed with central specimen tree although this has since been removed. To the south of the main drive a long walk runs the width of the cemetery from east to west, linked to the lower, northern drive by serpentine paths at each end, the eastern path extending also into the south-east corner of the site. This pattern of paths marks the extent of the original cemetery layout and survives as shown on the OS 25" map of 1932 with only small losses.

All the boundaries, but particularly those to the north and east, are defined by mature mixed plantations of trees and shrubs, including limes, while within the body of the cemetery a high proportion of Austrian pines survive. The size of the boundary trees and the pines suggests that they formed part of White's scheme. The pines are scattered throughout the cemetery, many following the lines of the paths. There are also some fine mature trees in the southern section of the cemetery which is shown on the 1932 OS map as having been planted with scattered clumps even though the path network had not been defined at this time. The paths through the southern section were added after 1932 in sympathy with the existing curves and symmetrical design and they make use of White's tree planting. From the centre of the east/west long walk, a path leads south and creates an oval walk, in the centre of which stands a large Austrian pine. This was planted to align on the site reserved for the chapel and suggests that White may have been responsible for the layout of the entire cemetery at the time of its creation. Certainly the Minutes of the Burial Board meetings suggest that this was the case, although this cannot be confirmed without the original plan which is not filed with the Minutes.

A local newspaper article described the planting at the time the cemetery opened. The article records that: the trees and shrubs which have been planted and which are now doing extremely well, are Austrian Pines, Scotch firs, copper beech, common birch, silver birch, maple, laurel, berberry, holly and flowering shrubs. All the main paths have been planted with red and white chestnut trees which in time will form beautiful avenues and behind them have been arranged rambler roses of various kinds, trained on pillars, and Austrian Pines. An avenue of limes has been planted along the main road. (Newspaper cutting, c 1914, in Minute book)

The detail and complexity of White's planting design has been partly lost over time, although the pines and a few of the deciduous trees survive, with the greatest diversity still evident in the boundary plantations.

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REFERENCES Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 1932 edition

Archival items Minute books of the Winchester City Council Burial Board, 1906-17 (W/C1/5/388; 391; 392; W/B5/25/4), (Hampshire Record Office)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Magdalen Hill Cemetery is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons: * Magdalen Hill Cemetery is an early-C20 cemetery (1914) laid out for a Burial Board. * The layout and planting of the cemetery was designed by Edward White (c1873-1952) of the firm Milner Son & White, subsequently to become noted designers of memorial gardens associated with early and mid-C20 crematoria including Golders Green and Kensal Green (qqv), and Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens (1934, qv). * The cemetery lodge was designed by the City Surveyor, Walter V Andersen. * The cemetery layout was devised to allow for the possibility of constructing a chapel should one be required, and for the expansion of the path network into areas which were planted but not used for burials when the cemetery was opened. * The design of the cemetery relates well to its setting on downland above the City. * The layout of the cemetery, including the lodge and the original ornamental planting survive essentially intact.

Description written: January 2003 Amended: February 2003 Register Inspector: EMP 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.