

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

MANSFIELD CEMETERY

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Mansfield Cemetery was opened in 1857. The buildings were designed by J P Pritchett & Sons and the Mansfield architect C J Neale designed the cemetery layout.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Prior to the Burial Acts of 1852-7, there was an urgent need for a public cemetery in Mansfield due to the overcrowded state of the existing burial grounds. With the enclosure of Mansfield Forest in 1852, the Town Commissioners set aside 10 acres (c 4ha) of land for use as a cemetery. The site, located on Nottingham Road and Derby Road, was set amongst fields and gravel pits. Mature oak trees on the site were owned by the Duke of Portland who insisted that some trees be retained and acorns planted to ensure a future presence of trees. In December 1855 Mansfield Burial Board was established and in January 1856 an advertisement appeared in *The Builder* inviting designs and plans for the buildings and layout of the cemetery. James Pigott Pritchett & Sons of York, who had an established reputation as cemetery architects, were commissioned to design the buildings and C J Neale, a local Mansfield architect, to design the grounds. In November 1856 the cemetery was consecrated, with the first interment made four days later. The cemetery was also perceived as a public recreational space as there were no established public recreation grounds in Mansfield at this time. The emphasis on ornamental and structural planting provided shelter on the fairly exposed site as well as privacy and interest. A visitor to the cemetery in 1864 wrote that it was 'very beautifully laid out, and looked like a great garden lawn belted with shrubbery and illuminated with the variegated lamps of flowers of every hue and colour. The meandering paths were all laid out with asphalt.' (*A Walk from London to John O'Groats*, quoted in Gallon 2001). Early photographs show the nature of the planting, predominantly evergreen trees and shrubs (Gallon 2001). The first extension of the cemetery was made in 1898 with the addition of a further 10 acres (c 4ha). By the early 1900s photographs show that the planting was providing an established structural backcloth to the cemetery grounds (ibid). In the 1970s many of the old headstones were cleared and the vegetation thinned out. The cemetery remains (2001) in use and is maintained by Mansfield District Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Mansfield Cemetery is situated c 2km south of the centre of Mansfield on elevated and undulating ground rising fairly steeply to the south. The c 8ha site is situated on the edge of the built-up area of Mansfield, with Nottingham Road and Forest Hill (formerly Derby Road) forming a curved boundary running along the north-east and east edge of the cemetery. The boundary is defined by stone walls and retaining

walls, with the surrounding land in mixed residential and commercial use beyond. The north-west boundary forms an arc from Nottingham Road at the northern tip of the cemetery, running 220m to the south-west and south and defined by a stone wall beyond which lie residential development and former gravel pits and woodland. The wall then turns west-south-west for 200m with mature woodland to the north, then continues south for 165m forming the western boundary, to the west of which is woodland and the grounds and buildings of the Crematorium. The southern boundary of the site here registered (the original cemetery of 1857 and the first extension of 1898) is formed by a stone wall which runs 120m west-south-west from Forest Hill, 350m south of the main entrance. The wall ends abruptly, the boundary of the site here registered being the continuation of its line west-south-west to where it joins the western boundary.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The principal entrance to the cemetery is from Nottingham Road to the east, a major trunk road lined with mature lime trees on the northern approaches to the cemetery, part of a planting scheme financed by the Burial Board in 1858 (OS 1877). The gateway to the cemetery (Pritchett & Sons 1857, listed grade II) is in Gothic style, a gabled free-standing arch in coursed square stone and coursed rubble with ashlar dressings, with a pair of latticework wooden entrance gates. The steep pitched gable has a finial with double gables and a Celtic cross. An empty lancet situated in the centre of the gable was formerly the housing for a bell, used to signal the imminent approach of the funeral procession from the north (Gallon 2001). A lodge built in the vernacular idiom is situated 12m north-east of the gateway. Formerly the cemetery superintendent's house (Pritchett & Sons c 1857), it has steep gables reflecting that of the entrance arch.

Another entrance, situated 215m south of the principal entrance, is from Forest Hill (formerly Derby Road). Here, a drive from a pair of simple stone gate piers and a pair of latticework wooden entrance gates leads to the cemetery chapels. Immediately south-west of the entrance is a lodge, formerly the sexton's house, in similar vernacular style.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The cemetery chapels (Pritchett & Sons 1857, listed grade II), of modest almost domestic scale, are situated 250m south-south-east of the principal entrance at the centre of a broad level terrace, set into the slope, which forms the forecourt of the chapels. The chapels, in Decorated Gothic style and forming an almost identical pair, are joined by a *porte-cochère* and are the focal point of the cemetery. Under the arch of the *porte-cochère*, on either side is a pointed-arched double door with moulded surround giving access to each chapel through a small porch: to the west a Nonconformist chapel, now used as a store (2001); to the east the Anglican chapel, restored c 1996, which still functions as a chapel (2001). Above the arch is a square tower surmounted by an octagonal bell turret with eight lancet bell openings with stone tracery and a plain octagonal spire with finial and cross.

OTHER LAND

A war memorial (Sir Reginald Blomfield c 1920, listed grade II) is situated 20m south-west of the principal entrance. The main avenue proceeds south, with a secondary path rising steeply to the south-west, and another secondary path rising

gently to the south-east. The broad main avenue takes a curving approach rising to the south, lined on either side by mature Austrian pine trees. Curving paths spur off to either side 50m south-south-west of the principal entrance, following the undulating contours of the topography. Informal groups of headstones and monuments can be viewed on the grass slopes to either side of the avenue, interspersed by an impressive and varied collection of mature coniferous specimens, informally planted and dating from the early years of the cemetery (Gallon 2001). Some 130m south-south-west of the principal entrance, the monument to Jabez Fish (1869, listed grade II), in Classical style, is the finest of a number of cast-iron monuments in the cemetery. The main avenue continues to curve, rising to the south where the view terminates at the chapel buildings.

A number of secondary routes, serpentine paths following the undulating terrain of the cemetery, link to the forecourt of the chapels. Immediately south-east of the chapels one such secondary route follows rising ground and returns in a north-westerly direction past groups of headstones, monuments, and mature coniferous and broadleaved specimens including beech, following a line along the north-west boundary of the cemetery. To the west and south of the chapels, in the late C19 extension area, curving paths follow the contours, adopting a style similar to that of the original layout, and link to a straight drive running parallel to the western boundary. In this area the planting is of mixed evergreen and deciduous trees with large open glades; the backcloth of mature woodland beyond the western boundary, which predates the cemetery, creates a visual boundary.

Returning to that part of the cemetery completed in 1857, 320m south-south-west of the principal entrance the stone boundary wall becomes visible to the west of the path. Excellent views would have been afforded from here, these now partially obscured by tree growth (2001). At this point a spur path descends towards the main avenue. The path following the north-west boundary proceeds, dipping steeply down to the north, in the past affording dramatic views across the cemetery and beyond, now (2001) largely lost due to tree growth. There is a gated access to Gravel Hill Plantation, situated west of the cemetery, 130m south-west of the principal entrance. A number of cleared headstones, monuments, and stone surrounds are thought to have been buried here (Gallon 2001). East of the path, on ground sloping down to the east towards the main avenue, are a number of monuments of important local tradespeople and a cast-iron monument to Henry Thompson (1878). The path proceeds parallel to the western boundary, descending towards the north-east. The area to the west, which is presently overgrown (2001), forms part of the unconsecrated section of the cemetery. A group of monuments and headstones survives, complete with stone surrounds.

A second path from the war memorial runs south-east to follow the eastern edge of the cemetery. Rising to the south-east, a number of important monuments stand immediately west of the path including that located 90m south-south-east of the principal entrance to those who died in the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. Erected in 1859, it was designed by a seventeen-year-old, William Thrall. The path curves to the south offering direct views east towards the A60, Nottingham Road, the level of the cemetery being above the road at this point. Some 300m south of the principal entrance, close to the eastern boundary, the large area of open grass and

new planting overlies a pit of headstones and stone surrounds recently (late C20) cleared from the cemetery.

West of the path, situated on an elevated ridge, are a number of prominent and impressive monuments. The Walkden tomb (c 1857, listed grade II), situated 130m south of the principal entrance, in Classical Revival style, is built in rock-faced stone with a stone slab roof. George Walkden was a solicitor and Steward to the Manor of Mansfield. The Walker mausoleum (1858, listed grade II), situated 165m south of the principal entrance, is in Greek Revival style built in rock-faced stone with a flat roof. The west front has a moulded Egyptian-style doorcase with cornice and a frieze with a Greek inscription. The memorial, in Gothic style, to Colonel Thomas and Lady Louisa Wildman (1859, listed grade II) is situated 175m south of the principal entrance. Colonel Wildman (1787-1859, whose inherited wealth came from sugar plantations in the West Indies, bought Newstead Abbey (qv) from the poet Byron in 1817 for £94,900 (ibid).

REFERENCES

C Brooks, *Mortal Remains* (1989), pp 167-8

Maps

George Sanderson, *Twenty miles round Mansfield*, 1835 (Mansfield Local Studies Library)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1877
 2nd edition published 1899
 3rd edition published 1915

Archival items

Barbara Gallon, MS research notes, 2001 (Old Mansfield Society Archives)

Description written: October 2001

Amended: November 2001

Register Inspector: JS

Edited: November 2002