

REGISTER OF PARKS AND GARDENS OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST

WEST CEMETERY, DARLINGTON**DURHAM****Date Registered: 16 JUL 2003****DARLINGTON****Grade: II****NGR: NZ2714****Site Reference Number: 4985**

A cemetery opened in 1858, the chapels and lodge designed by the Darlington architect, J P Pritchett and the grounds laid out by Mr Joseph Bowker of Scarborough.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

By the early-1850s there was an urgent need for more burial space in Darlington township, as the only existing churchyard was becoming full. 'One of the most pressing wants of the town is that of a public cemetery' (Longstaffe 1854). In March 1855 tenders were invited for land for the purposes of a burial ground and, in the following July, 12 acres (c 4.8ha) of agricultural land on Salutation Farm west of the town, were purchased from a Mr Graburn for £2,400 (Darlington Burial Board Minutes). An existing footpath was redirected along the adjoining field to the north. In February 1856, the local architect J P Pritchett (1830-1911) was the successful candidate in the design competition for the cemetery and was appointed to advise on the chapels, entrance lodge, gates, fencing and the laying out of the grounds (Minutes).

The grounds were divided into three equal portions by walks running north to south, the chapels located in the north-east corner near to the existing turnpike road along the eastern edge of the cemetery (Kelly 1879). The Bishop of Durham consecrated the eastern portion for use by the Church of England in April 1858, with the central portion for Nonconformist use and one acre of the western portion allocated for use of the Catholic Church (ibid). In September 1857 plans for the laying out and planting of the cemetery, presented by Mr Joseph Bowker of Scarborough, were accepted. The cemetery opened in June 1858, with Mr Aaron Bowker appointed as the first Superintendent and Registrar of the new cemetery. By the following November a total of fifty interments had taken place (Minutes).

In the late-C19 the cemetery was extended to the west (OS 1879), with further later extensions to the west by 1912 (OS 1915), to the south by 1939 (OS 1947) and, more recently, a further extension to the west. The cemetery remains (2003) under the ownership and management of Darlington Borough Council.

DESCRIPTION**LOCATION**

West Cemetery is situated c 1.6km west of Darlington town centre on land rising gently to the east and north. The c15ha roughly rectangular site is in a largely residential area with allotments to the west. The area here registered is bounded on the east along Carmel Road North by 0.6m high red brick walls with stone copings with small red brick buttress piers at regular intervals. The railings which formerly surmounted the low

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walls have now (2003) gone, but the red brick piers surmounted by substantial square stone copings, which linked the sections of railings, remain (2003). Hedging, predominantly beech, has been cultivated along the eastern boundary to replace the railings. On the east side of Carmel Road North and opposite the cemetery is an area of garden suburb development - Carmel Gardens. The southern boundary extends for 200m as a 1.8m high red brick wall with stone copings and is aligned at right angles to Carmel Road North; in parts the wall is in disrepair. Beyond the wall to the south are back gardens and a council plant nursery. The boundary of the area here registered continues west as the drive which runs parallel to and 110m south of the main drive from the entrance as far as the west boundary wall. The western boundary is defined by a high red brick wall with stone coping which separates the area here registered from the fourth cemetery extension (C20) (outside the area here registered). Railings (C20) bound the cemetery at the southern extremity of the western boundary. To the north the cemetery is bounded by a high red brick wall of variable height with stone copings, beyond which lies Cemetery Lane which follows the line of the footpath redirected at the time of the formation of the cemetery. Beyond the lane is an area of mature woodland and housing (late-C20). At the eastern extremity of the northern boundary part of the boundary wall part of the boundary wall is missing (2003), wooden fencing has been temporarily erected to take its place.

Views beyond the cemetery are limited by mature tree growth (2003) and the high boundary walls. Good and varied views within the cemetery are afforded by the layout of the trees and shrubs.

ENTRANCES

The main entrance to West Cemetery is situated at the centre of the eastern boundary, and comprises a central carriage entrance with high stone gate piers (c 1858) and double gates, with pedestrian entrances immediately to the north and south with stone gate piers (c 1858) beyond. A stone cross formerly topped each gate pier, but only the one on the gate pier to the south remains (2003) Beyond the high entrance gate piers, low curved boundary walls connect to north and south to red brick corner piers which link to the eastern boundary walls.

The cemetery lodge (J P Pritchett c 1858), in mock-Jacobean style, built in red brick with stone detailing and a steeply pitched, fishtailed, roof of Welsh slate, stands immediately inside the cemetery entrance on the north side. Most of the building is currently occupied for residential use and part is used as a cemetery office (2003).

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The cemetery chapels (J P Pritchett c 1858), in Decorated Gothic style, built in stone with steeply pitched, fishtailed roofs of Welsh slate, are situated on an elevated terrace, 100m north-west of the main entrance. The west chapel, formerly the Nonconformist chapel, is connected to an identical east chapel, the Anglican chapel, by a central carriage arch or porte-cochère above which is an octagonal bell tower surmounted by a spire, which has been altered from the original (C20). Some of the earliest monuments in the cemetery stand north-west, and north-east of the cemetery chapels. The crematorium (C20) and associated buildings are situated 350m west of the main entrance.

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OTHER LAND

The section of the cemetery here registered is formal in layout. A rectilinear grid of paths and drives is laid out about a broad drive which extends west from the main entrance. Many of the paths and drives are lined by avenues of fine specimen trees. In the grounds between there are fine collections of broadleaved and evergreen tree and shrub specimens, providing an elegant and private setting for burial, with a varied balance of open grass glades and areas of enclosure.

From the main entrance the view is channelled along a broad straight drive, the main drive, which leads gently downhill to the west, overhung and lined by mature trees, both evergreen and broadleaved. Immediately west of the entrance there is an intersection of the main drive with paths leading north and south, parallel and close to the eastern boundary. Some 65m further west, the main drive intersects with a wide drive which forms a north-south axial route aligned on the cemetery chapels, situated 80m north of the intersection. This axial route extends from the chapels to the southern edge of the cemetery. As the axial drive leads gently uphill to the north to approach the portecochère of the chapels, a symmetrical arrangement of curvilinear drives, lined by some of the earliest monuments in the cemetery, branches off from the drive to give separate access to each chapel and to the wide forecourt surrounding the chapel buildings. Early accounts suggest that the area to the east of the axial drive was consecrated for Anglican burial, with the area to the west for use by Nonconformists (Kelly 1897).

Continuing west on the main drive, there is a further intersection of paths, 125m west of the main entrance. From here the paths which extend north and south giving access to areas of burial are tree-lined. Further west, on the south side of the main drive, the area formerly used as a stonemason's yard and storage area, is now the car park for the cemetery, well screened by hedges, with little remaining of the original buildings. To the north, a Garden of Remembrance has been created (C20) around a circular path layout. Some 60m further west on the main drive is another path intersection; this is the path which ran east of and parallel to the western boundary of the cemetery as originally laid out (Kelly 1879 OS 1897).

Further west the main drive gives access to the first extension of the cemetery, established by the late-C19 (OS 1897). The maturity of the tree and shrub plantings giving continuity of character with that of the original cemetery. A wide circular path intersection or rondpoint marks the centre of this extension. Some 350m west of the main entrance and south of the main drive the crematorium (C20) stands in the area of the cemetery added by 1915. A Garden of Remembrance lies immediately south of the crematorium buildings. The main drive continues west and, some 150m west of the crematorium, a wide gateway in the high walls which mark the western boundary of the area here registered, leads to that part of the cemetery extended in the late-C20 (outside the area here registered) characterised by open grass areas with no plantings.

Immediately east of the gateway, paths running closely parallel to and east of the western boundary wall lead to north and south. The path leading north, lined by an avenue of trees, takes a right angle turn in the north-west corner of the cemetery and continues east and gently uphill, tree-lined, parallel to the northern boundary wall, eventually returning to the northern forecourt of the cemetery chapels. The particularly

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fine tree collection along this path can be appreciated from views across the cemetery.

The path which proceeds south from the gateway leads towards the third extension (early-C20, outside the area here registered), in the south-west area of the cemetery. Some 110m south of the gateway a drive leads east, parallel to the main drive, with to either side groups of headstones and mature tree and shrub specimens. The drive continues towards the eastern boundary, returning north to the cemetery entrance.

West Cemetery contains an exceptional collection of mature trees and shrubs, present in varied forms in avenues and groupings. There are some particularly fine individual specimens including *Abies pinsapo* (Hedgehog fir), *Catalpa bignoides* (Indian Bean Tree) and *Sorbus domestica puriformis* (True Service Tree) (F Green 2001).

REFERENCES

Longstaffe W H D, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Darlington* (1854), 331
 Kelly, *Post Office Directory of Durham and Northumberland* (1879), 52
 Green F, Memorandum regarding the historic landscapes of cemeteries (in Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs-Memoranda, CEM 81, The United Kingdom Parliament, 21 March 2001)

Maps

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1855, published 1858
 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition revised 1896, published 1897
 3rd edition revised 1912, published 1915
 1947 edition

Archival items

Darlington Burial Board Minutes 1855-1860 (Durham Record Office)

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

West Cemetery, Darlington is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * A good example of an early High Victorian (1856-58) public cemetery for a provincial town in formal grid-pattern style complimented by later C19 extensions in similar style.
- * The chapels and lodge were designed by the Darlington architect, J P Pritchett and the grounds laid out by Mr Joseph Bowker of Scarborough.
- * Pritchett designed the buildings and layout at York Cemetery (qv) in 1836-7, and St Andrew's, Newcastle (qv), 1855-57 and for a time worked in partnership with his son-in-law, John Middleton. From the mid 1850s his practice, Pritchett and Sons, became established nationally in the field of public cemetery design.
- * The conjoined Gothic chapels form a focal point in the design offset from the main axis, to enliven a level site.
- * A crematorium has been inserted into the landscape.
- * Social interest is expressed in a variety of C19 monuments, most of which are relatively modest.
- * The cemetery layout and structures survive intact, together with exceptional planting including much from the C19.

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