

## Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

West Yorkshire

Undercliffe Cemetery

Bradford  
SE1734

GD2820  
II

### Summary of Historic Interest

Cemetery opened in 1854 which was designed by William Gay (1814 – 1893) and considered to be his finest work. The core of the site contains many grand C19 monuments, and has been described as ‘one of the most striking achievements of Victorian funerary design’ (Brooks, 1989).

### Chronology of Historic Development

The Cemetery was established by the Bradford Cemetery Company, which was provisionally registered in 1849. Representatives of the company, who included prominent Nonconformist businessmen Henry Brown, Titus Salt, Edward Ripley, and first Mayor of Bradford Robert Milligan, bought the land at Undercliffe in 1851 at a cost of £3 400. William Gay, who was appointed the first Registrar, laid out the site at a cost of £12 000. He subsequently designed a number of cemeteries, chiefly in the north of England, of which this is considered the most distinguished (Brooks 1994).

Plans were drawn up for the extension of the site to the west in 1876. These were never carried out but the proposal map includes the whole of the existing site and shows Gay’s executed design. The Cemetery, which contains more than 23 000 graves and approximately 124 000 interments, including those of many notable figures of C19 Bradford, remains open for burials (1998).

The site was sold to a private owner during the 1970s and was bought by Bradford City Council in 1984; it is currently (1998) leased to The Undercliffe Cemetery Charity as a custodian of the site on behalf of the Local Authority.

### Site Description

#### Location, Area, Boundaries, Landform, Setting

The Cemetery is situated on the north-east side of Bradford, c 3km from the city centre. The c 10ha site is on the crest of Undercliffe Hill, c 210m above sea level. The land slopes down to the north and west, commanding long distance views of the city and the Pennines beyond. The boundaries are walled and are formed by Undercliffe Lane on the south side, Undercliffe Old Road on the east side, Otley Road on the north side, and by gardens of houses on Airedale Crescent and Airedale College Road on the west side. An area at the north-eastern corner of the site between Undercliffe Old Road is the site of a school, which replaced a stonemason’s yard shown on the 1876 map, and is outside the registered area.

#### Entrances and Approaches

There are two main entrances, one on the south side of the site, on Undercliffe Lane, where there are rebuilt stone walls and gatepiers. A lodge and a Registrars Office in

this position were demolished during the 1970s. They have been replaced by a C19 stone lodge brought from another site and re-erected in the late C20. The other entrance is on the north side of the site, on Otley Road. A lodge which stood at this entrance was also demolished in the 1970s, but the stone walls and gatepiers survive.

#### Principal Buildings

The principal buildings of the Cemetery were two chapels which were situated slightly to the east of the centre of the site, overlooking a promenade. These replaced chapels of 1854, and were designed in 1878 by Lockwood & Mawson. They were demolished during the 1980s and the foundations are visible c80m north of Undercliffe Lane entrance.

#### Other Land

The main axis of the Cemetery is a broad promenade which runs east/west along a spine of high ground for almost the whole length of the site, dividing it into two parts, the southern of which is slightly narrower than the northern. The promenade, which is lined with striking C19 monuments, is connected with entrances by a system of straight and curving paths which conform with the layout shown on the 1876 map. The map also shows a line of planting dividing the more expensive plots along the south side of the promenade from cheaper ones further to the south. This has disappeared and the area is all in use as burial plots. A similar line of planting separated the plots along the northern side of the promenade from plots to the north, and elements of this survive. Views to the north are obtained from the whole of the promenade; at its west end the ground drops away steeply and there are long distance views to the south-west, west and north. This is the site of an obelisk (listed grade II), c10m in height, which forms the termination of the vista, and is a memorial to Joseph Smith (d. 1858) who was land agent to the Cemetery Company and reserved this plot for himself. C100m north-east of this is a roughly circular area, with a late C20 circular openwork cast-iron structure and the centre, which was landscaped in the late C20 for use as a memorial garden, though the landscaping was not completed.

The focus of the site is slightly east of the centre, where the two chapels were situated on the south side of the promenade. The ground is terraced down on the north side of the promenade, and a set of stone steps, aligned midway between the two chapel sites, leads down the slope to a broad terrace on which an elliptical area, with quartering paths, is delineated by a perimeter path. A second set of stone steps, aligned with the first, leads down from the north side of this area and connects with winding paths from the Otley Road entrance. Plots in this central area, like those on each side of the promenade, were the most expensive, and they have a concentration of the largest and most ornate of the C19 monuments. Those listed grade II are the Mawson Monument and the Behrens Mausoleum on the northern side of the promenade, the Swithin Anderton Monument and the Illingworth Mausoleum within the central elliptical area, and the Miles Moulson Monument c80m to the north-east of this.

On the eastern side of the site, which was reserved for Nonconformist burials, there is an area of Quaker burials which is situated c 110m north-east of the Undercliffe Lane entrance and is distinguished by the modest rectangular memorial stones, all of identical design and laid flat, which contrast with the ornate monuments of other parts of the site.

There are the remains of C19 and later ornamental planning around the site perimeter, form which it has encroached as scrub.

The design for Undercliffe was probably inspired by Joseph Paxton's Coventry Cemetery of 1847 which incorporated an architectural terrace, and Gay's development of this idea may have influenced Edward Kemp, whose lay out of Anfield Cemetery in Liverpool (q.v.), incorporates features such as a sunken elliptical area overlooked by a promenade and a system of curving paths.

The Cemetery Directors were conscious of the recreational possibilities of the site. In the 1850s they wrote: 'The situation of the Cemetery is one of great beauty, and the views of the surrounding country ... are not to be surpassed in the neighbourhood of Bradford. Whilst it will be the endeavour of the Directors, to preserve the greatest possible decency and decorum, in the conduct of the interments, they also desire to throw the Cemetery open to the public as much as possible ... and so long as propriety of behaviour is observed, none will be excluded from the grounds, who desire to avail themselves thereof, either as a place of relaxation or for contemplative retirement.' (in Beesley & James, 1991). The site became a 'favourite promenade of the inhabitants of Bradford.' (ibid) and an engraving of c1854 shows fashionable-dressed crowds walking in the Cemetery and pointed at the views of the city below.

## References

### Published sources

- N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: West Yorkshire*  
C. Brooks, *Mortal Remains*, 1989, pp58, 59, 64, 68, 89, 105, 127-8, 140, 142.  
I. Beesley & D. James, *Undercliffe, Bradford's Historic Victorian Cemetery*, 1991.  
C. Chapple, *Undercliffe Cemetery*, n.d., c1994

### Maps

- W. Gay, *Bradford Cemetery Undercliffe, Plan Showing Proposed Extension*, 1876  
OS 6" to 1 mile            1912  
OS 6" to 1 mile            1933 with additions of 1938

Reproduced in Undercliffe Cemetery Information Pack: *Map of the Borough of Bradford*, 1834

Sale Map, 1851

Post Office Bradford Directory Map, 1887-8

### Archival

- C. Brooks, *English Historic Cemeteries a Theme Study*, 1994, p.55  
Engraving showing crowds promenading in Undercliffe Cemetery, n.d. c1854.

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