

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT
CHIPPING ONGAR
TL 553 035

CHIPPING ONGAR CEMETERY

An example of a small burial ground demonstrating the layout as proscribed by J C Loudon (1843), with rectilinear cross paths forming a grid pattern creating distinct sections for different burial types, grass path, evergreen trees and shrubs and central chapel as a visual focal point.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

With the demise of the urban churchyard by the mid-19C the need for publicly funded burial grounds resulted in the Metropolitan Internment Act (1850). Initially covering London, the Act was extended across the country in 1853 with the Burials Act. The Ongar Burial Board first met in 1863 to find a site as required by the law. Several sites were put forward with the final decision made to acquire the plot of land known as Silvercroft which was sold to the Board for £459.

A plan of the cemetery (28 February 1866) shows the area, measuring 1:0:35, of which the Episcopal portion is allocated 0:2:25, Dissenters given 0:1:0 and 0:1:10 running along the front of the site marked 'not to be appropriated'. The 'not to be appropriated' section could not legally be used for burials since this area fell within 100 yards of a dwelling house – the station master's house across the road.

A plan from 1880 shows a more formal layout following principles laid down by Loudon (On the laying out of cemeteries, 1843). The front of the cemetery facing the road is set aside for flowerbeds creating an attractive entrance to the cemetery. A central footpath leads to the chapel with a crossing footpath in front of it. The central footpath continues from behind the chapel with a crossing footpath in front of it. The central footpath continues from behind the chapel creating four burial plots. These footpaths appear not to have used hard landscaping material, again something advised against by Loudon who recommended grass paths to encourage maximum drainage on site. The northwest and northeast quadrants are consecrated ground, the southeast is labelled 'Portion to be consecrated and approved by the secretary of state'. The southwest plot is unconsecrated ground and is marked in the earlier plan as the portion set aside for dissenters.

The initial quotes for the chapel came in at £600 to £955 surprising the Board members who had budgeted the total expense for the new cemetery at £1030. The chapel was constructed but on a smaller scale at a cost of £380. Other costs included conveyancing at £120 and £80 for the 'enhancement of gates, fencing and grounds'. According to Richard Porter in his 'Notes' the total spent on the new burial ground was £1,100 (p14).

The planting of the cemetery was delegated to a local nurseryman, Mr Searle. The elms which formed parts of the west boundary were lost in the 1970s due to Dutch elm disease and further loss of large specimen trees occurred in the 1987 storm.

By the 1974 OS map an additional area of land was appropriated to the east of the cemetery more than doubling its size. This area, bereft of trees and shrubs, appears utilitarian, lacking the quaint melancholy of the earlier section which lies at the front of the site. Another new addition is a paved area in the northwest quadrant of the original cemetery. This area has seating and a small circular (unkempt) rose bed with a feature urn. This is in the area designated for flowerbeds in the 1880 plan.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The original site is fairly square in shape bounded by hedges, mainly hawthorn and pollarded lime along the northern boundary. The eastern boundary has been opened out to take in the new plot which more than doubles the size of the cemetery. The southern and eastern sides are overlooked by houses. The new plot is devoid of planting and decoration. The original cemetery has two main bisecting paths creating four sections. The chapel is at the intersection in a central position. The main plants are *Taxus baccata*, *Pinus silvestris*, *Ilex aquifolium*, *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (one particularly large specimen, *Cupressus* and *Prunus lusitanica*.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The cemetery is located at the northern end of Chipping Ongar High Street opposite the railway station. The entrance is through a cast iron double gate (not original to the site) directly from the High Street.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Small double-gabled single storey chapel made of buff coloured brick and red brick stringcourse used decoratively to emphasise the lancet arch window and doors. The roof is slate-tiled. The chapel was designed by Isaac Charles Gilbert of Nottingham (p112 *Aspects of the History of Ongar*). The double-gable accommodates two chapels, with separate entrances, one for the Established Church (originally with a small belfry), the other for the Non-

conformists. In other respects the chapels were identical in size, design and fittings, even including an unusual coffin turntable in each. One is now used as a store, the other unused, and both are in poor structural condition (subsidence and water penetration).

REFERENCES

Published Secondary Sources

Aspects of the History of Ongar (Ongar Millennium History Group, 1999)

Loudon, J C *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries and on the Improvement of Churchyards* (facsimile of 1843 edition), Ivelet Books Ltd Redhill Surrey 1981

Porter, Rector Richard Ibbetson *A Few Notes on the Town and Parish of Chipping Ongar* (1877)

Maps and Images

OS 1st edition 6" 1873-4 sheet no.51

OS 2nd edition 6" 1895 sheet no.51 SW

OS 6" New Series 1919 sheet no. 61 NE

OS 1:10,000 1974 sheet no. TL 50 SE

Plan dated 28 Feb 1866 (ERO ref: D/C/C 17/5)

Plan 1880 (ERO ref: D/P 124/24/1-2)

Archives

Letter: formal request to consecrate grounds and chapel from the Burial Board to the Bishop of Rochester dated 17 Dec 1866 (ERO ref: D/C/C 17/5)

Act on consecration of burial ground and chapel including the service sheet for the consecration (ERO ref: D/C/C/17/5)

Copy of Burial Laws Amendment Act 1880 chap. 41 with plan (ERO ref: D/P 124/24/1-2)

Vestry Minutes: Chipping Ongar 1869 (ERO ref: D/P 124/8/5)

Researcher: Cassy McCleave

Field Visit: 11 October 2004 with Robert Adams

Edited T Way 21.02.06