

CADW/ICOMOS REGISTER OF LANDSCAPES, PARKS AND GARDENS
OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES

REGISTER ENTRY

CATHAYS CEMETERY

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| Ref number | PGW (Gm) 19 (CDF) |
| OS Map | 171 |
| Grid ref | ST 1825 7855 |
| Former county | South Glamorgan |
| Unitary authority | The City and County of Cardiff |
| Community council | Cathays |
| Designations | Listed buildings: Cemetery gateway and forecourt walls Grade II; Mortuary chapels and reception Room Grade II |
| Site evaluation | Grade II* |
| Primary reasons for grading | Well preserved large Victorian multi-denominational cemetery, retaining most of its original layout and ornamental evergreen planting. It contains some elaborate and interesting memorials dating from 1859 onwards. |
| Type of site | Urban cemetery |
| Main phases of construction | 1859; early twentieth century |

Site description

Cathays Cemetery, originally called Cardiff New Cemetery, is situated on level and gently sloping ground to the north of the city centre. It is kite-shaped, bounded on the east side by a railway, and on all other sides by roads. It is divided into a northern and southern half by the A48 dual carriageway, the southern part being the original cemetery. The two halves are quite separate, although intervisible across the deep cutting of the A48.

The first cemetery on the site, Cardiff New Cemetery, opened in 1859 in open countryside to the north of Cardiff. It was a multi-denominational cemetery, each faith being allocated a section, and with chapels for 'Episcopals', 'Dissenters', and Roman Catholics. The cemetery occupied the northern half of the present cemetery south of the A48, its southern boundary being on the line of the main north-west/south-east walk south of the main entrance on the south-east side. It was laid out with a central axial walk orientated north-west/south-east leading to twin chapels and a grand

entrance and lodge at the southern end. Branching off from the main walk were two curving side walks forming a heart-shaped plan. On either side of the chapels were symmetrical layouts of oval and crossing paths, with further paths leading around the outer parts of the cemetery. At the north-west end was a Roman Catholic chapel with radial walks leading off from it. The cemetery was planted mainly with conifers, particularly flanking the main walks and around the perimeter. Graves and memorial stones are dense in some areas, more scattered in others, and regimented into rows in others. There is an immense range of style, ranging from the grandiose and highly sculptural to extreme simplicity. The stone used is usually marble, but other materials include granite, sandstone, limestone and slate. Most of the original layout of the oldest part of the cemetery survives, the main parts missing being the Roman Catholic chapel and the oval path layout to the south-west of the Dissenters' chapel.

Early in the twentieth century, before 1915, the cemetery was expanded to Whitchurch Road in the south and a new area to the north of the Taff Vale railway, which followed the route of the present A48 road, was opened up. Previously the area to the north had been a farm (Wedal), with a house (Mount Pleasant) and slaughterhouse to the north. To the north was an area of allotments, covering an area to the north of the present cemetery entrance. On the east the area is bounded by the Rhymney railway. The 1920 Ordnance Survey map (revised in 1915) shows the area to the south of the allotments as cemetery, laid out with a simple grid pattern of paths. Mount Pleasant and Wedal were still in existence. Subsequently the cemetery was expanded to cover the allotments and Mount Pleasant was removed; Wedal remains.

The southern half of the cemetery is surrounded on all but the north-east side by walls in bands of pebbles and coursed grey stone topped by iron railings. A stone wall runs along the north-east side. The railings are recent replacements of the originals which were removed during the Second World War. The main entrance is in the middle of the south-east side, flanked by iron railings. It consists of iron gates in triple stone gothic arches, the central one larger and surmounted by a cross. This was built in 1857-59, designed by R.G. Thomas of Newport and T. Waring of Cardiff. Inside the entrance is a tarmac circle with a central flowerbed and surrounding ring of grass. To the north-east is a two-storey gothic lodge of stone with a pitched slate roof. Its smaller windows are trefoil-headed. In front is a circular flowerbed with a central golden cypress. Further south, along the south-east side is another entrance with double iron gates and stone piers with recessed gothic panels and triangular tops ornamented with half-trefoils. Similar piers are used at all the entrances. The entrance is flanked by incurving banded walls, here using random stone rather than pebbles. In the south-west corner is a small gate flanked by stone piers. Near the east end of the south side is a similar, wider entrance, with double iron gates and side pedestrian gates flanked by incurving stone walls. The south-east corner of the site is occupied by the fine Carnegie Library building. The west side, along Allensbank Road, has two entrances, one main one and one side one, with iron gates, piers, and flanking banded walls with random stone rather than pebbles.

Inside the main entrance are twin gothic chapels on either side of a central reception room surmounted by a bell tower, with porte-cochères and linking passages between them. The chapels are simple rectangular stone buildings with steeply pitched slate roofs in the same style as the entrance and lodge. They were built in 1857-59 by R.G. Thomas and T. Waring. The episcopalian one, to the north-east, is consecrated, and has a more elaborate east window. The dissenters' chapel, to the south-west, is simpler and is unconsecrated. The passages and porte-cochères, which have high

gothic arches for hearses to draw up in, are in similar style. The octagonal bell tower is three-storey, topped by a copper-roofed dumpy spire. The whole ensemble remains as it was built except that the original spire of the bell tower was twice the height of the present one. In front of the tower is a group of cypresses, and around the chapels yews and cypresses are planted. Opposite them, near the boundary, are limes, cypresses, and a monkey puzzle tree.

To the south-west is the oldest non-conformist burial area. This has lost its original layout and now has a straight tarmac path running south-westwards through it. To the north-east is the oldest episcopalian burial area which retains its original layout of oval and cross paths. These are of gravel, and the cross path is flanked by Irish yews and cypresses. A group of old graves is situated in this area beneath some large holly trees. The boundary here is flanked by a row of pines.

To the west of the chapels the cemetery retains its original heart-shaped layout of gravel walks, with plantings mainly of pines and cypresses, and with graves interspersed among them. From an entrance near the north end of the west boundary a walk leads to a circle in which is a small stone building (formerly a public lavatory, now disused) planted around by cypresses. This circle is the site of the former Roman Catholic chapel, demolished as unsafe in 1986. It was built in 1859, and an old photograph shows that it was similar to the other chapels, with a small bellcote. Around the site is a cluster of Roman Catholic graves, including a very grand one to a bishop, in the form of a small shrine, with steps up to a crucifix and other statues in arches. Other sculptural graves in this area are of Carrara marble, and were imported from Italy. To the north is a grass area devoid of burials: these were destroyed by bombing in the Second World War.

The southern half of the southern part of the cemetery is laid out with straight crossing tarmac paths, with the graves in rows. Many of these were moved in the 1970s into the present rows to make grass cutting easier. The boundaries are planted with trees: a row of limes along the south boundary, cypresses along the south-east side, limes along the south end of the west side and yews at the north end. The interior has a sparse planting of pines, and flowering cherry trees around a small circle where two paths cross.

To the north of the A48, the northern half of the cemetery is laid out with straight crossing walks, graves in uneven rows, and with similar planting to the southern half. The ground slopes down towards the south. The main walk leads east from the entrance on the west boundary and is flanked by cypresses. It leads to a circle where a north-south path, also flanked by cypresses, crosses it. Walls, piers and railings are similar to those in the southern part of the cemetery.

Sources

Secondary

Cathays Cemetery Heritage Trail (City of Cardiff Leisure and Amenities Department leaflet)