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'CALCULATED TO IMPROVE THE MORALS AND THE TASTE': EDWARD KEMP'S CEMETERY DESIGNS IN LIVERPOOL AND BIRKENHEAD – EFFICIENCY AND AESTHETICS IN PUBLIC LANDSCAPES

John Claudius Loudon in his On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries and on the Improvement of Churchyards *(1843) identified two fundamental principles for creating fitting places for the interment of the dead: the disposal of the remains in a healthy, hygienic manner and the improvement of moral sentiments and general taste. In summary, the priority was to achieve efficiency and aesthetics – two of the motivating forces behind much nineteenth-century landscape design. However, the aesthetics of cemetery landscape design is often considered in the context of garden, park and domestic landscape design at the expense of understanding the influence of efficiency of land use. At both Liverpool Cemetery (now known as Anfield Cemetery) and Birkenhead Cemetery (subsequently known as Flaybrick Cemetery and, more recently, as Flaybrick Memorial Gardens), Edward Kemp's landscape designs were the product of aesthetic sensitivities exhibited throughout his landscape work and a response to the need for efficiency and functionality, the epitome of modern landscape architecture. This paper discusses the problematic state of urban cemeteries in the early nineteenth century and the urgent need for radical reform, primarily because of their health risks. It focuses on the seminal contribution to cemetery design of Loudon, but the emphasis will be on a detailed analysis of two new cemeteries in Birkenhead and Liverpool designed with a view to identifying the component elements and features that Kemp deployed and the extent to which he succeeded in creating burial landscapes that were both efficient and pleasing. It focuses, in turn, on their layout, paths and planting, concluding that they were two of his finest works.*

THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THE CREATION OF NEW CEMETERIES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the rapid expansion of what we now recognize as our major urban centres, most notably in the north of England. Many grew from small market towns and villages, but even the existing larger towns and cities saw dramatic growth.[1] Initially, the proponents of urban expansion, with the exception of a few notable visionaries, prioritized the development of the main sources of economic growth – the mills, factories and transport infrastructure required for the production and transportation of goods – over the accommodation and well-being of the labour force that was essential for the expansion of output and the increase in productivity. Signs of municipal pride and statements of affluence and ambition could be seen in the building of town halls, market halls and exchanges. More slowly, and

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with a growing realization of the political and social implications, calls were made for improvements to housing and hygiene, better healthcare for the masses and, in a wider context, urban reform as a whole. In particular, there was a better understanding of the spread of infectious diseases, largely through the work of Dr John Snow (1813–58), the father of modern epidemiology. The existing belief, according to the miasmatic theory of disease causation, attributed cholera outbreaks to the adverse effect of putrid air or miasmata, while Dr George A. Walker (1807–84), who advocated a similar pythogenic explanation, argued that gases given off by human putrefaction 'could be deadly to anyone who inhaled them'. Snow's initial publication on cholera was published in 1849, but it was his research on the causes of the 1854 cholera epidemic in Soho, London, that provided the first epidemiological explanation of disease causation and finally forced the medical establishment to change its opinion.[2] The severity of the cholera outbreaks in 1831–32, 1848–49 and 1854 also provided evidence that the wealthy were not naturally immune to urban epidemics. This meant that there was an increasing realization that mutual benefits, irrespective of social class, could be derived from improvements to environmental conditions. This, in turn, resulted in a push to identify more green space in cities for the improvement of health, represented specifically by the public parks movement from the 1840s onward.

The emergent agenda of environmental and health reform also included the need to address the serious and growing problem of disposing of human remains: quite simply, the existing urban churchyards, many of which had been in continuous use since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, had no spare capacity for the interment of more bodies and were physically overflowing thereby representing a health hazard. Dr Walker's campaign for burial reform, for example, was based on 'his first-hand knowledge' of urban health conditions and the impact of appalling sanitary conditions on morbidity and mortality.[3] Moreover, the same was true for village churchyards that had been subsumed within the expanding urban settlements. With regard to the two cemeteries discussed in this paper, their establishment was directly a result of rising population pressure and clearly illustrate the health problems generated by the rapid expansion of urban communities. In the case of Liverpool, its population in the fourteenth century was around one thousand, but it fell to around six hundred by the mid-sixteenth century. During the eighteenth century, largely due to an unprecedented growth in trade and commerce, including the slave trade, its population grew from approximately six thousand to around eighty thousand. This trend was reinforced in the nineteenth century, fuelled by a significant rise in immigration, including in 1847 alone, at the height of the potato famine in Ireland, three hundred thousand Irish immigrants. By the time of the 1911 Census Liverpool Borough had a population of 746,421. Similar evidence of the problems generated by a high rate of population can be found in the case of Birkenhead. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Birkenhead had only 463 residents: by 1851 its population had expanded to 30,804, but it had risen to 201,516 by 1911.[4]

The fact that the Church of England still had a monopoly in the mid-nineteenth century on the burial of the dead simply exacerbated the growing problem of disposing of human remains. This effectively limited burials to parish churchyards only, thereby generating a steady and substantial income for the incumbent priest. Some Non-conformist communities had gathered together to purchase land in order to develop burial grounds where they could follow their own burial customs. In 1819, the Rosary Cemetery was opened in Norwich specifically for dissenters, and this was followed by other initiatives funded by the creation of joint-stock companies that paid an annual dividend to shareholders. The Chorlton Row Cemetery in Chorlton-cum-Medlock (Manchester), which witnessed its first interment in 1821, was designed 'for use of

persons of all denominations'; Low Hill Cemetery in Liverpool was established by Nonconformists in 1825; while Westgate Hill Cemetery in Newcastle, which had been laid out 'in an ornamental manner', was opened in 1829.[5]

But in general, the parish churchyard remained the only place for Christian burial. The condition of churchyards is well illustrated by the description of St Alban's in Worcester:

> On entering this edifice (it was during summer) a most overpowering effluvia forced me to beat a retreat for a few minutes; the windows were nearly all closed, and the ventilation being miserably imperfect, the exhalations arising in hot weather from the burying-ground underneath the floor of the church are of the most corrupt and injurious. There is also a plot of burial ground attached to the earth, inclosed by stretching a wall between two corners of the building; it is of a triangular shape, measuring about two yards by five, the mould being heaped up against the church, with the surface about eight or ten feet from the ground in Little Fish Street; so that the few remains which are laid or rather impounded here must be deposited at least on a level with if not higher than the pavement of the street, and within a few inches of the aforesaid old wall, which abuts into it; the rains have also free license to percolate through the soil, and after becoming tinctured with whatever is there to be met with, may ooze out their impurities either under the church floor or on the pavement of the street. It is not likely that a practice proved to be so pregnant with evil will be much longer tolerated.[6]

Churchyards had been used in rather ad-hoc ways, with some traditions relating to the orientation of graves and preferential locations within the churchyard depending on the status (or lack of status) of the person interred. Such a random, inefficient and unhygienic state could hardly be tolerated in the age of scientific and social advancement.

JOHN CLAUDIUS LOUDON AND THE IDEAL CEMETERY

Importantly, there was no historical precedent for cemetery design. Early, private cemeteries drew on the most obvious sources of layout and the ones that seemed wholly appropriate for the interment and memorialization of the dead: the utilitarian churchyard (a simple walled enclosure) and the Arcadian landscapes of the private country house with chapels and lodges taking the place of the country house and temples, generally in the classical style. The grand metropolitan cemeteries of London, but also Joseph Paxton's London Road Cemetery in Coventry, St James's Cemetery, Liverpool, and Dobson's Newcastle General Cemetery are fine examples of the latter. Serpentine paths, sweeping lines and profuse planting may have been an appropriate style for the cemeteries of the wealthy middle and upper urban classes, but they did not address the underlying problem of accommodating rapidly increasing numbers of burials. Nor would the underpinning theory behind cemetery design and use be sustainable. A new order of design was clearly needed.

Most of the men commissioned to design and layout new cemeteries in the mid-nineteenth century were landscape designers or architects (or a combination of both), but the majority, including Paxton, Edward Kemp and William Barron, had already established their reputations as designers of public (and, in some cases, private) parks. It is not surprising, therefore, that John Claudius Loudon, one of the most important and highly regarded landscape designers of this period, should have been the first to recognize the continuing shortfall in specialist guides to cemetery design. In 1843, he published *On the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries*, which proved to be a definitive and influential contribution to the design of new cemeteries at a time when the emerging concept of a 'garden cemetery' underpinned a 'cemetery movement' that led to the creation of new cemeteries on the outskirts of towns and cities (Figure 1).[7] In the preface, he stated that:

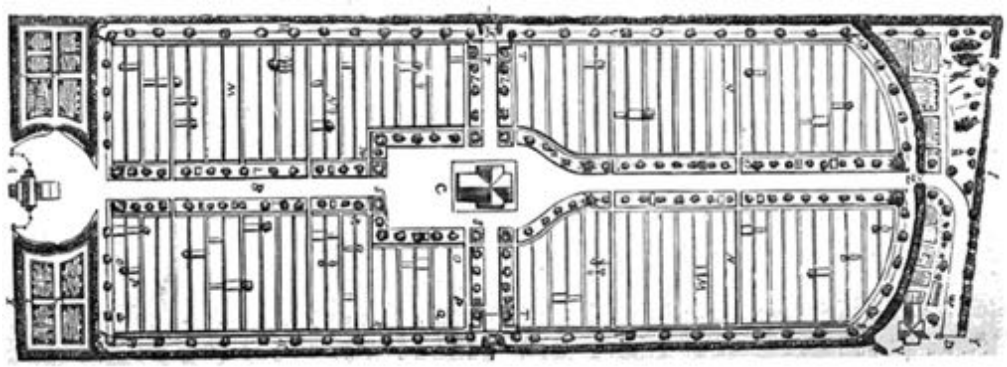

Figure 1. Layout of Histon Road Cemetery, Cambridge; from John Claudius Loudon, *On the Laying Out, Planting and Managing of Cemeteries and on the Improvement of Churchyards* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longman, 1843)

> Undoubtedly there is a great difference between them [churchyards and the new cemeteries]; but, as far as relates to catacombs, vaults, and brick graves, and to the practice of reopening family and common graves, down to the last-deposited coffin, the improvement has been very trifling, and a thorough reformation is required. Unless this takes place, it is not difficult to foresee that the new cemeteries will soon cease to be wholesome places of recreation.[8]

Loudon goes on to describe both the ideal organization, the layout of an efficient cemetery, and the methods of grave construction and management. Above all, his emphasis was on practicality, with an overriding need to develop the design in line with the site's location, whether it was large or small, flat or hilly.[9] The organization of the burial ground and its presentation, as described by Loudon, became the seminal guide for cemetery design, which can be seen in the vast majority of new sites laid out throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. These ideals were closely followed by Kemp, who acknowledged and recognized that the aesthetic qualities of cemetery landscapes were significantly different from a garden landscape. How relevant those principles were will become apparent when considering the layout of both Birkenhead and Liverpool cemeteries.

The first principles expounded by Loudon relate to the situation, extent and boundary treatments. They should be located far enough away from human dwellings to prevent the spread of infectious disease, but close enough to be accessible for recreation and personal improvement. The cemetery should be large enough to serve the population of the settlement and take into consideration probable increases or decreases in numbers (although here Loudon significantly underestimated the likely demographic changes in urban settlements). And lastly, the site should be secured by a boundary that would discourage theft and 'favour solemnity by excluding the bustle of every-day life, while a view of distant scenery is admitted to produce a degree of cheerfulness, and dissipate absolute gloom'.[10]

With regards to the internal layout of the cemetery, Loudon proposed a simple grid system of roads and paths, with the chapel or chapels located at central, conspicuous intersections to facilitate accurate planning and identification of grave locations, but with the grave plots laid out in 'double beds' to create a grass path between rows to enable access, and ease of orientation. However, Loudon also recognized that individual site conditions would necessarily dictate, to some degree, the organization of the layout which would be partly a 'matter of necessity and partly of design and taste'.[11] He took account of 'hilly, undulating, or otherwise irregular' ground which would require the construction of sinuous paths and roads. The efficiency of a grid layout of roads and paths is obvious,

but Loudon also attributed greater aesthetic value to a rectilinear layout:

> In general, straight roads and walks are greatly to be preferred in a cemetery to winding ones, not only as admitting of more economical occupation of the ground […] but as contributing far more than curved lines to the grandeur and solemnity of effect.[12]

And again, these characteristics can be seen displayed in Kemp's layouts at Birkenhead and Liverpool cemeteries (now known respectively as Flaybrick Memorial Gardens and Anfield Cemetery) (Figure 2).

One important aspect of Loudon's proposals was his egalitarian approach to the allocation of burial plots – a principle more relevant to Kemp's layout of Birkenhead than Liverpool, but in some respects identifiable at both. Loudon proposed that:

> In making arrangements for the situations of graves, regards must be had to the wealth and taste of the persons who will probably use the cemetery, and the proportion of situations for sumptuous tombs and monuments adjusted accordingly. At the same time we should mark no part of the ground as exclusively devoted to any class of society, of graves, or of monuments; nor should there be any part in which a monument might not be erected.[13]

A similar equality of disposition can also be seen in Loudon's recommendations for the distribution of buildings within the designed landscape. He expounded a 'picturesque' principle of composition citing examples from the earlier private cemeteries established in London as both good and poor examples of scale and massing. His principles were simple and again appear to have been followed by Kemp at Birkenhead and Liverpool: chapels were either sited sufficiently far apart as if they were in different planes or not seen

Figure 2. Secondary path at Birkenhead Cemetery; part of the grid of paths flanked by evergreen shrubs and occasional trees. Photo: author, October 2017

together at all – as used by Kemp at Birkenhead. Alternatively, they could be clustered together to appear as 'one pile of building', an approach that Kemp followed at Liverpool Cemetery with a distinct clustering of buildings at its centre.

With regard to the planting of a cemetery, Loudon rejected the established notion of mimicking the 'parkland' landscapes of the rural elite with no 'masses and belts':

> Every mode of introducing trees and shrubs which is identical with that practised in planting parks and pleasure-grounds is to be avoided, as tending to confound the character and expression of scenes which are, or ought to be, essentially distinct.[14]

His proposed new order of planting was founded on the principles of efficiency, practicality and an 'appropriate' aesthetic. Clumps and belts of planting would, in Loudon's view, impede the free movement of air preventing the drying of soils within the site, and would unnecessarily limit the available land for interment. Similarly, the use of domed canopy broadleaved trees would generate too much shade and appear 'bulky'. Tall, conical, dark-coloured evergreen specimens were much preferred and had the advantage of being 'classically and popularly associated with places of sepulture'.[15] This approach to planting was taken up by Kemp at both Birkenhead and Liverpool and can be seen in the sparse use of strategically located evergreen 'feature' trees with a structure of shrub planting beneath, laid out in a manner that helped to organize the site and to offer orientation for the visitor and mourner.

Loudon's treatise covered a wide range of other issues, including the details of grave construction, the design and location of monuments, the function of ancillary buildings and the management and maintenance of cemeteries, but his principles of organizing and laying out a cemetery had a significant influence on Kemp.[16] Indeed, it is with his cemetery layouts and designs that we see the emerging talent of Kemp as a landscaper. Most often associated with public parks, possibly due to his long association with Birkenhead Park, it is important to recognize that Kemp's earliest public commissions were cemeteries. He was already well-established as an advisor to private land owners and from the late 1840s onward he was in the process of developing a significant client base. The sequence of Kemp's cemetery commissions began in 1858 when he was invited to provide advice on the planting of St Helen's Cemetery; he took over the design role for Liverpool Cemetery from William Gay, the surveyor to the Burial Board who had won the design competition in 1860 but resigned from his post a year later; he was responsible for the design and laying out of Birkenhead Cemetery from around 1860 until May 1864; and he designed Southport Cemetery in 1865.[17] By contrast, his first public park commissions were not until the mid-1860s when he was commissioned to design and layout Newsham Park in Liverpool (1864–68) and Grosvenor Park, Chester (1864–67). It has been suggested that Kemp applied the principles of public park design to his cemetery layouts. However, the following analysis of his first two cemetery sites will demonstrate that he was principally following the theories of Loudon, while applying refinements of his own rather than designing a public park with graves. His public park designs were perhaps more closely allied to the approaches of his mentor, Paxton, but, in comparing Paxton's London Road Cemetery, Coventry, with Kemp's cemetery designs the divergence is clear. At London Road Cemetery Paxton applied the Arcadian approach with sweeping, curving paths, a classical Non-conformist and a gothic Anglican chapel located apart, to be seen as a temple and 'folly' respectively, and with a shelterbelt and dense clumps of trees such as would be seen in a country estate landscape (Figure 3). Whereas Kemp would adhere to the principles of ordering the layout of his cemeteries for the greatest efficiency and planning only deviating from these principles where conditions dictated or where adornment was appropriate.

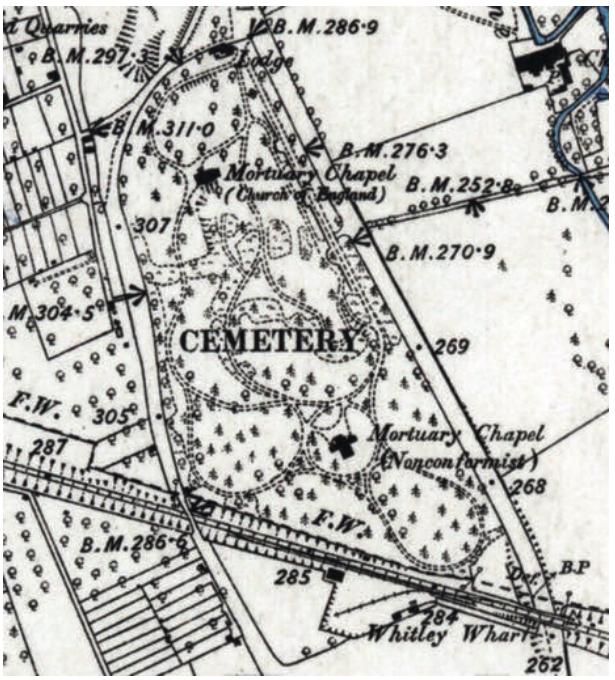

Figure 3. Joseph Paxton's layout for London Road Cemetery, Coventry, employs sweeping, curving paths, chapels located like garden buildings, shelterbelts and clumps of trees, as found in a country estate landscape; from Ordnance Survey, 1st edn 1906. Courtesy: Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900 and reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland

KEMP AND THE LIVERPOOL AND BIRKENHEAD CEMETERIES

Site selection

Despite increasing evidence of the serious health hazards posed by overcrowded cemeteries, the process of reform was a lengthy one. From 1842 onwards, several burial bills were drafted, but it is not until 1852 that the government finally passed the first Burial Act which initiated the overdue reform of metropolitan graveyards. However, it was only in 1853 and 1854 that further Burial Acts paved the way for civil cemeteries to be established in provincial towns and cities. By permitting parish vestries to establish burial boards and to raise money through the rates to create new cemeteries, a start could be made in reducing health risks and improving the urban environment.[18]

Liverpool and Birkenhead cemeteries were both established after the passing of the Burial Acts which were enacted between 1852 and 1854. In the case of Liverpool, the corporation acted swiftly after the promulgation of the 1853 Burial Act and banned all new burials in the city's churchyards in 1854. In 1856 a meeting was held in Liverpool to discuss putting into force the new powers invested in local authorities through the Burial Acts and to begin the process of creating new municipal cemeteries outside the city centre. Responsibility for the choice of new sites fell to Mr Samuel Becket Jackson who had been a member of a select vestry group that had been pressing for such a development. However, it proved difficult for the Burial Board to find an appropriate site as ground conditions around the outskirts of the city were principally rock or clay: quite the contrary to the most suitable conditions identified by Loudon and too difficult to use for regular burials. Eventually, land bounded by the Bootle Branch Railway and Priory Road was chosen. The identified one hundred and twenty-one-acre site was difficult to acquire as the land belonged to eleven different owners with several tenants who had to be removed.[19]

At Birkenhead the situation was notably different. The idea of a public cemetery was initially put forward in 1842 by the Birkenhead Improvement Commission in response to the township's growing population, but it also reflected the ideals by which the town

was being developed and the usual problem of overcrowding in the parish churchyards. Joseph Paxton was asked to formulate a design, most likely due to his close association with the Improvement Commission through his work at Birkenhead Park, but the idea was shelved until the 1860s, primarily because of the international economic crisis of the late 1840s which led to a lengthy recession in the township and a decline in its population. It is perhaps unsurprising then that the chairman of the Improvement Commission, Sir William Jackson, championed Paxton's apprentice and the superintendent of Birkenhead Park, Kemp, to design the new cemetery at a time when the township's economic position, and the return from rates, had improved considerably. At both Birkenhead and Liverpool cemeteries the local architects Charles Lucy and Charles Littler were appointed to design the buildings, having won both architectural competitions.[20]

The locations selected for both cemeteries were elevated sites. The suitable site for the new Liverpool Cemetery was found on the plateau at Anfield, east of the River Mersey with the land falling to the north-east. The location was as much dictated by the suitability of the geological conditions as its aspect; the site being on Triassic sandstone overlain by glacial till, sands and gravels. The site for Birkenhead Cemetery was found on the eastern slopes of Bidston Hill and was underlain by Helsby Sandstone. Both sites therefore afforded views to open countryside, and, in the case of Birkenhead, views to the town centre; they were located away from centres of population; and were suitably exposed and airy allowing for and benefitting from free-draining soils and an easily worked substrata. In most respects they meet Loudon's recommendations for the site of a new cemetery, including his view that they 'ought to be in an elevated and airy situation, open to the north, but with a south aspect, that the surface may be dried by the sun'.[21]

Layout

Given the differences in the sites selected for the new cemeteries at Birkenhead and Liverpool, it is remarkable how closely Kemp was able to adhere to the principles proposed by Loudon. Birkenhead Cemetery was proposed on a site of only sixteen and a half acres, whereas Liverpool was to cover some one hundred and twenty-one acres, although both sites were to be considerably extended over time. The Birkenhead site was an extremely awkward 'L'-shaped site, wrapping around a worked-out quarry on Bidston Hill. The site at Liverpool was a straightforward rhombus, bounded by roads on two sides (Priory Road and Walton Lane), the Bootle Branch Railway and privately owned land. The Liverpool site was fundamentally level with just a gentle fall to the east and north-east, whereas the Birkenhead site had falls to the north and north-west in the northern arm of the 'L' and a steep slope to the east in the southern/eastern arm (Figures 4 and 5).

As with many cemeteries of the time there was an expectation that burial areas would be allocated for different denominations – Anglican, Non-conformist and Catholic – and provide chapels for services for each denominational group. As previously mentioned, Loudon had expressed the view that the siting of buildings in cemeteries should result in them either being seen as one group or in a dispersed manner so as not to read in the same visual plain. Given the small size of the Birkenhead site and its difficult shape, Kemp opted to group the Anglican and Non-conformist chapels into one symmetrical structure with a shared *porte cochère* and to locate the Roman Catholic chapel in the northern arm of the site. Despite this division there is a clear egalitarianism in the siting and treatment of the areas. The Anglican and Non-conformist burial areas were equally and symmetrically divided by a central carriage drive leading to the *porte cochère* with a spire over forming the focal terminus of the central drive and a striking landmark on Bidston Hill. The Roman Catholic burial area was to occupy the northern arm of the site with

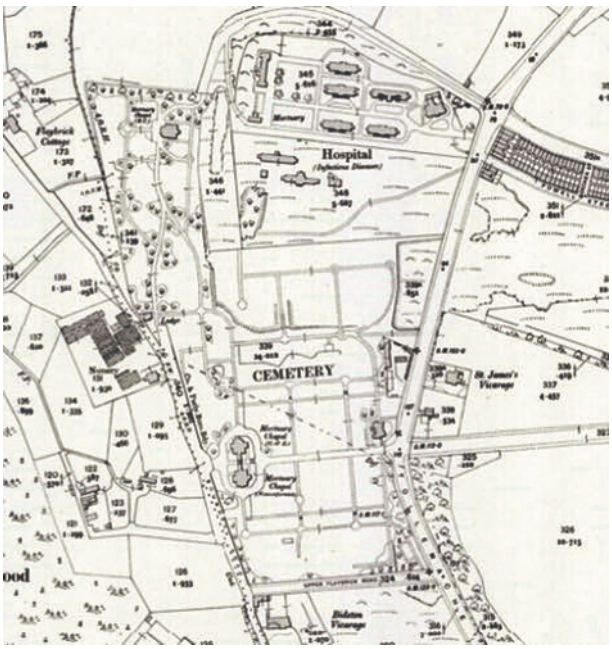

Figure 4. Birkenhead Cemetery; from Ordnance Survey, 1st edn 1899. Courtesy: Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900 and reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland

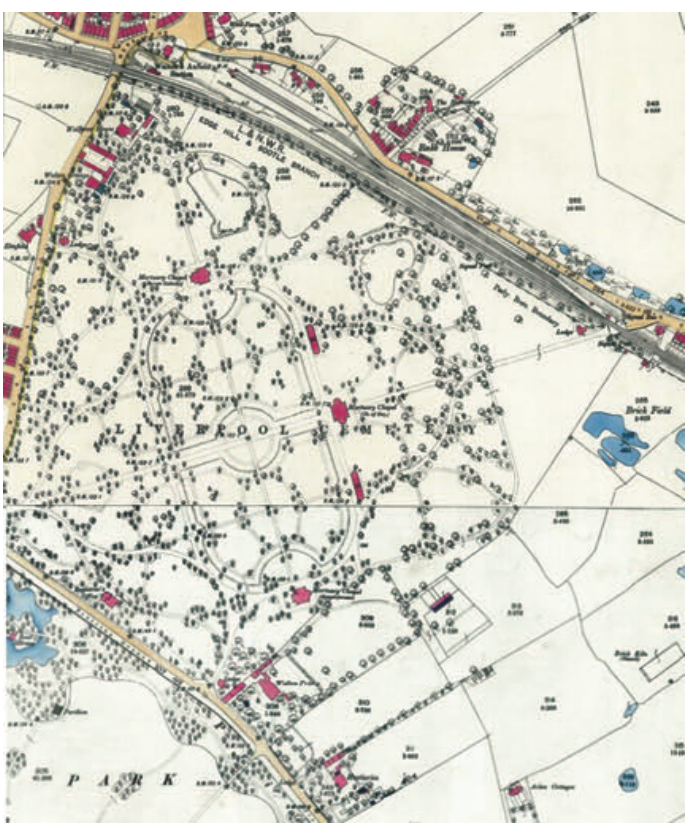

Figure 5. Liverpool Cemetery; from Ordnance Survey, 1st edn 1895. Courtesy: Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900 and reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland

its own entrance and approach drive from the south. The setting of the Roman Catholic chapel was, however, given a similar axial treatment to the other building through the application of a short central walkway to the west front.

Kemp then divided the whole site into a grid pattern of primary and secondary paths. The northern arm of the site ran across a break in the landform, transitioning from the east-facing slope of the Anglican and Non-conformist burial area to the west-facing slope of the Roman Catholic area. The point where the two arms of the site meet was also narrow, pinched between the former quarry and Boundary Road. These aspects required a subtle manipulation in the carriage drives and paths with the result that they became curved. However, careful analysis of Kemp's layout shows that the area was laid out in a similar grid pattern to the rest of the site. As the main carriage drive to the Roman Catholic chapel curves to cross the sloping ground, two parallel arcing paths join it; one linking back to the southern half of the cemetery and the other progressing to the north-western corner of the site. The result is an even and organized distribution of burial plots. It has been suggested that Kemp applied a 'picturesque' treatment to the landscape of the Roman Catholic area to create a contrast with the greater degree of formality of the Anglican and Non-conformist areas. But there can be no doubt that he originally applied strong geometric lines, parallel paths and an organized layout of burial plots suggesting a commitment to the principles of order and efficiency, and that the loss of the path structure due to neglect and the maturity of planting in this area by the late twentieth century, along with the demolition of the Roman Catholic chapel, has subsequently resulted in an artificially romantic and picturesque character (Figures 6 and 7).

At first glance, the layout of Liverpool Cemetery appears to be notably different, primarily because the organization of carriage drives and paths formed a complex geometric pattern. It is likely that the general pattern of the layout, with a strong west–east and north–south axial alignment, had already been established by William Gay: the use of a broad central terrace or carriage drive can be seen in his designs for Toxteth Cemetery, Liverpool (1856), Undercliffe Cemetery, Bradford (1854) and, to a lesser extent, Philips Park Cemetery, Manchester (1866). At Liverpool Cemetery the near square (rhombus) site allowed for the cross-axial arrangement with the cemetery

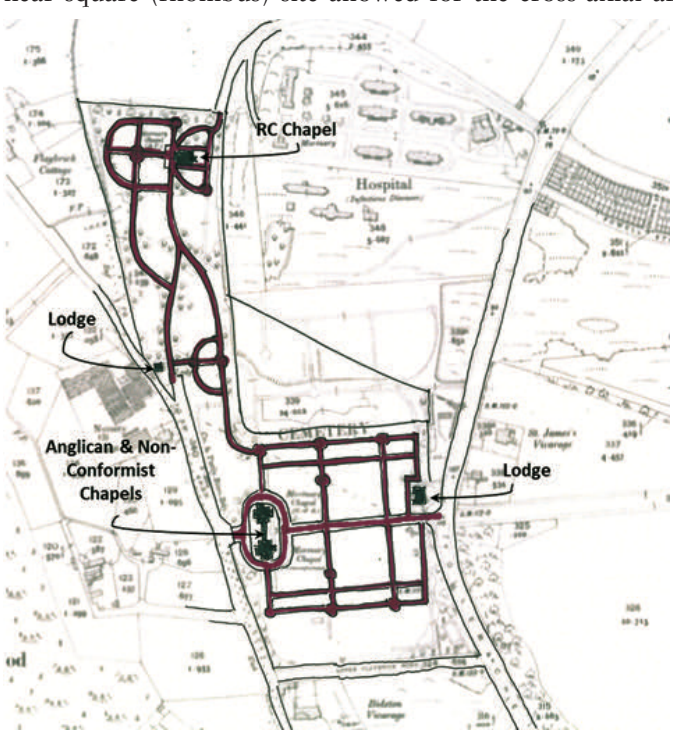

Figure 6. Grid layout of Birkenhead Cemetery: schematic plan of 1863, with the author's hand-drawn annotations

Figure 7. Curved paths used in the Catholic burial area at Birkenhead in order to traverse the changes in slope. Photo: author, October 2017

chapels clustered at the centre. Although Kemp had used the same straight approach at Birkenhead the monumental scale of the principal drive at Liverpool, from the clock tower and lodges at the Walton Lane and Priory Road junction to the Anglican chapel at the centre of the site, is markedly different. The same equity of distribution and treatment of burial grounds and chapels can also be seen at Liverpool, as can a simple grid pattern of burial plots underlying the apparently complex geometry of the overall design (Figures 8 and 9).

The landscape at Birkenhead certainly offered a degree of natural drama due to its hilltop location, but the flat site at Anfield lacked a similar interest. In order to compensate for this, Kemp decided to sculpt some areas in the cemetery in order to add an impression of depth to the site. Some of the paths were raised by up to three feet above excavated, sunken areas. Part of the grounds on the east side were raised to the general level of the site and this area was then used to construct the north and south ranges of catacombs (constructed as brick vaults) which formed flanking structures to the Anglican chapel and focal features on two secondary parallel paths either side of the principal carriage drive. Unlike Birkenhead there was an area of the cemetery clearly allocated for the erection of high-status monuments, namely the terraces surrounding the sunken areas either side of the central carriage drive, the extent of which was contained by the three chapels (Figure 10).

Figure 8. The broad central carriage drive at Liverpool Cemetery. Photo: author, March 2014

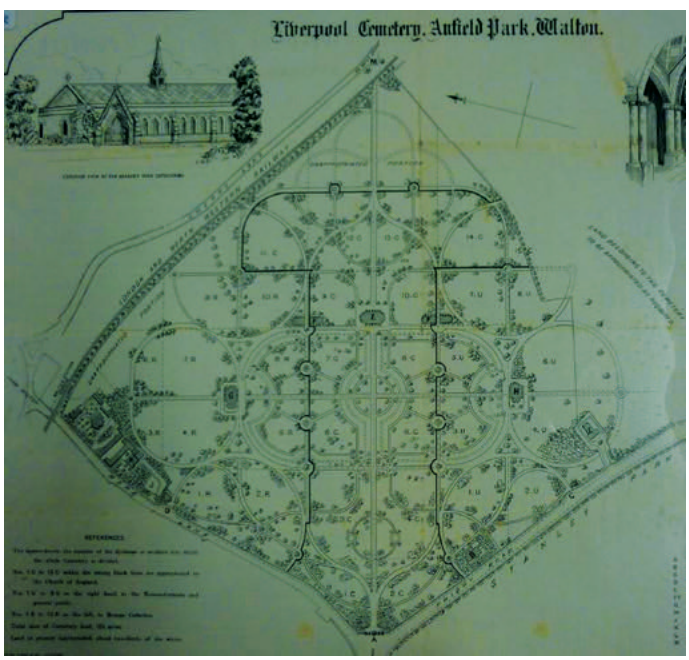

Figure 9. General layout of Liverpool Cemetery (dated 1903). Courtesy: Liverpool Record Office

Paths

The design of the path network deployed by Kemp at both Birkenhead and Liverpool is ordered and simple: primary carriage drives, secondary broad paths defining wider burial grounds; and tertiary paths providing access to the interior of burial grounds and

Figure 10. Stepped paths to sunken areas at the centre of Liverpool Cemetery create relief in a generally flat site. Photo: author, March 2014

to individual burial plots. In the Anglican and Non-conformist section of Birkenhead Cemetery the single, broad carriage drive links the main entrance directly to the twin chapels, while secondary paths run parallel to the main drive on raised terraces to the north and south. Both the primary and secondary paths were in the form of tree-lined avenues. The tertiary paths provided links across the burial grounds, on a north to south axis, in order to provide access to individual graves. The Roman Catholic area, as previously described, deployed curved primary and secondary paths to traverse the topography, with tertiary paths, in two cases in the form of hemispheres, again providing closer access to grave plots. Later plans of Birkenhead Cemetery, however, indicate that not all of the paths in the Roman Catholic area were laid out, including the two hemispheres (Figures 11 and 12).

At Liverpool Cemetery the principles remained similar, with its broad central avenue and a central carriage drive that also extended eastwards from the Anglican chapel towards the Cherry Lane entrance, underneath the Bootle Branch Railway. Again, secondary paths ran parallel to the main carriage drive, in front of the Roman Catholic and Non-conformist chapels and centred on the two ranges of catacombs, crossing the central sunken area. A secondary path also provided a circuit around the central sunken area, linking all three chapels and the catacombs. Tertiary paths then access the site grid pattern through the use of circles, ovals, ogees and part-circles. However, the paths cut through the planned grid rather than dividing the site into oddly shaped segments. The positioning of tertiary paths has perhaps come to dominate our understanding of the site rather than the planned orientation of graves into a grid pattern, although a careful examination of early plans of the cemetery reveal faint dashed lines demarcating the regular and ordered grid. Subsequent reordering of the

Figure 11. Primary carriage drive at Birkenhead Cemetery looking towards the Tollemache Road entrance with views to the town of Birkenhead beyond. Photo: author, October 2017

Figure 12. Secondary path at Birkenhead Cemetery providing access to the interiors of the burial areas, flanked by evergreen shrubs and occasional trees. The intersection of paths is marked by a *rond point* planted with a specimen tree. Photo: author, October 2017

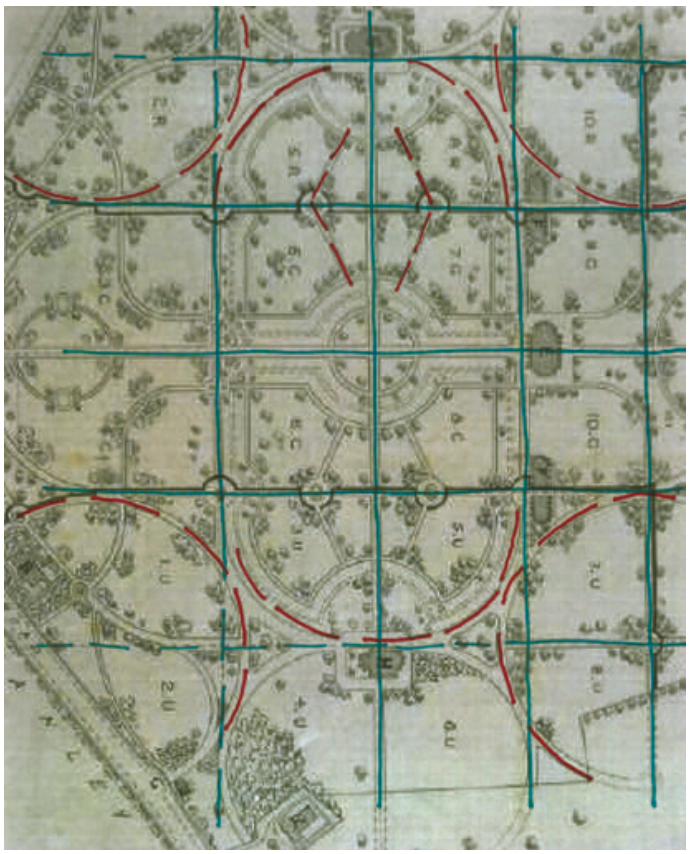

Figure 13. Grid layout of Liverpool Cemetery with a geometric path network providing access to burial areas (detail of Figure 9). Courtesy: Liverpool Record Office, with the author's hand-drawn annotations

site has further undermined the organization of paths and the grid layout, including the introduction of the World War I memorial in the northern part of the sunken central area. None of the carriage drives or secondary paths appears to have been planned as avenues, but the central carriage drive has been planted with regularly spaced trees during the twentieth century (Figure 13).

Planting

As detailed planting plans for the two cemetery sites do not appear to exist it is uncertain as to the precise species of tree and shrub used by Kemp. However, an analysis of early plans and Ordnance Survey maps along with the survival of some of the original planting provides an indication of the probable structure and composition of Kemp's scheme of planting. Some comparisons can be drawn from planting schemes prepared by Kemp for public parks and private gardens, but it should be recognized that he clearly differentiated between the planting of the different landscapes he worked on. As he wrote in the first edition of *How To Lay Out A Small Garden*: 'A garden seems naturally intended to communicate cheerfulness and pleasure; and this design should never be frustrated by making it look like a cemetery.'[22]

At Birkenhead Cemetery the principal carriage drive appears to have been planted with alternating evergreen and broadleaf trees. A number of substantial hollies survive on the site: although they have now grown considerably, it is likely that they were intended to be maintained as geometrical features. The secondary paths also appear to have been planted as avenues, but elsewhere tree and shrub planting is restricted to carefully sited clumps and feature trees, thereby providing relief along the longer paths, the screening

boundaries and the back of the sexton's lodge, as well as at the intersections of the paths. These nodes or *rond points* are indicated on plans as the site of single-specimen feature trees, although one is occupied by a substantial memorial: that to Sir William Jackson MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme (1847–68) and chairman of the Birkenhead Improvement Commission (1842–46). Similar *rond points* were also employed in the design of Liverpool Cemetery. On the whole, the planting is irregular with only the occasional use of formal, symmetrical patterns. Given the strictly organized layout of paths at Birkenhead and the strong geometrical layout at Liverpool, the planting provides a relaxed and contrasting informality resulting in a harmonious landscape composition of great aesthetic quality: ordered but pleasant.

CONCLUSIONS

The Anglican burial ground at Liverpool Cemetery was consecrated by the Bishop of Chester on 27 April 1863 and Birkenhead Cemetery was opened for burials on the 30 May 1864. Both cemeteries were substantial contributions to the social welfare of the surrounding communities: the final resting places for the wealthy and poor alike. Both were also considerable statements of municipal investment and pride. Liverpool Cemetery, including the purchase of land, cost something in the region of a hundred and

Figure 14. Grave of Edward Kemp, 1817–91. Photo: author, October 2017

fifty thousand pounds. The elegant gothic chapels, lodges and entrances were clearly visible, the spires of the chapels particularly prominent on their hilltop locations.

Kemp, through the application of the principles promoted by Loudon, had created burial landscapes that complemented the energy and investment being made into these two rapidly burgeoning settlements. While the Arcadian landscapes of the great London cemeteries may evoke a strong sense of romanticism and a certain 'gothic' charm the cemetery landscapes of both Birkenhead and Liverpool stand as testimony to an advanced understanding of the need for both aesthetic quality and efficiency. Both sites continued their intended purpose until the late twentieth century with little change to their original layouts, although both were considerably extended over time. And Liverpool Cemetery continues to function as one of the main burial and cremation facilities for the city.[23] Further testimony to the efficiency and quality of their original designs is the fact that the subsequent extensions to the burial grounds adhered to the same pattern and design principles used at their establishment.

The masterful planning and design of both cemeteries used all available ground, provided pleasing and well-proportioned settings for the elegant architecture of Lucy and Littler and the locations for the erection of fine monuments to the people of Birkenhead and Liverpool. Perhaps in a typically northern, 'understated' way neither cemetery contains vast and showy edifices, although it is equally likely that those to be interred at both sites felt that the landscapes of Birkenhead and Liverpool cemeteries were a fitting enough memorial.

The landscapes of Birkenhead and Liverpool cemeteries must stand as two of the finest works of Edward Kemp. He skilfully manipulated the natural qualities of both sites and worked within constrained boundaries. He organized the sites through the careful planning of carriage drives and paths to permit free and easy movement around the sites. And he applied a palette of planting that adorned the landscapes with a structure of trees and shrubs that would not only make the cemeteries places of beauty, but also not compromise the primary purpose of providing space for burial.

By applying the principles of efficiency and aesthetics promoted by Loudon, Kemp created two cemeteries that stand as nationally exceptional examples of high Victorian municipal burial grounds. They predate his better-known work designing public parks and, in the case of Liverpool Cemetery, are at a much larger scale than most of his private work. The successful design and implementation of Liverpool Cemetery undoubtedly rewarded Kemp with the commission to design the adjacent Stanley Park, where he continued to apply the principles of efficiency and practicality – the provision of pleasure grounds, sports fields and a promenade terrace that 'borrowed' the landscape of the adjacent cemetery to provide a wide vista of green within the growing city served the city's residents well.

An egalitarianism of approach to the designs was perhaps humbling and reminded the communities of Birkenhead and Liverpool that death was the great leveller. It is also pertinent that Birkenhead Cemetery provided the final resting place for the two architects of the buildings at both Birkenhead and Liverpool cemeteries, Lucy and Littler, and also Kemp himself: all three graves are marked by unassuming, simple memorials, the landscape itself a fitting memorial to the undoubted talent of Kemp (Figure 14).

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[12] Ibid., p. 19.

[13] Ibid., p. 18.

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[16] For further details on Loudon's work, see James Stevens Curl, 'John Claudius Loudon and the Garden Cemetery Movement', *Garden History*, 11/2 (1983), pp. 133–56; *idem*, 'The architecture and planning of the nineteenth century cemetery', *Garden History*, 3/3 (1975), pp. 13–41; and *idem*, *A Celebration of Death: An Introduction to Some of the Buildings, Monuments and Settings of Funerary Architecture in the Western European Tradition* (London: Constable, 1980). In particular, see the detailed discussion of Loudon's designs for the cemeteries in Cambridge and Southampton.

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