

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST
LOCAL LIST: **DACORUM**

Present Name of Site

Historic Name (if known)

HEATH LANE CEMETERY

Poor Field, Heath Farm

Parish/Town **Hemel Hempstead**

National Grid Reference of Principal Building: TL050 069

Present Area (approximate) 5 acres, 2 roods and 35 perches

Brief Description

The area lies to the west of Hemel town centre on a site sloping to the east and with views over the Gade Valley to the town and beyond. It is roughly square in plan with a carriage drive around the sides and cross paths meeting in a circus at the centre, flanked by 2 chapels. Both paths and graves have been laid out in a linear fashion, not in the picturesque meandering fashion of earlier in the century. Specimen trees adorn the grounds and a short avenue flanks the west path.

A Burial Board was constituted to look at extra provision for St Mary's and St John's churches as capacity was insufficient at both sites and in 1878 a petition was sent from them to the Bishop of St Albans for an additional Burial Ground and Chapel.

The Board had acquired a parcel of lands of just over 5 acres in Poor Field in Heath Farm. To access this land they acquired the right of a roadway and passage, fifteen feet wide. By 1877 they had been granted the freehold on the land and enclosed it with a low brick wall to the front and oak fences on the other sides.

The land was divided into land to be consecrated for Anglican burials and non-consecrated land for other burials by a wide carriage road and iron boundary markers.

The cemetery was laid out to designs of Coe and Robinson who had worked on the first phase of the London Bedford Park development. Coe, a pupil of George Gilbert Scott, had worked on Holy Trinity Bracknell, St Crispin's Bermondsey and other Gothic Revival buildings. The chapel and part of the land were consecrated on 27th June 1878 and burials permitted. By 1946 the consecrated portion was full and the Town Council requested the Bishop to consecrate more land which was done on May 9th 1947. Plans to purchase more land in the 1950s were shelved and a new cemetery elsewhere was opened in 1960.

Anglican and Non conformist Mortuary Chapels: Similar in style, both are of dark brick with red brick banding and dressings around the arched windows, under a steeply sloping tiled roof. They face each other across the circular carriage sweep on the main east-west axis with the Anglican one to the south and the Nonconformist to the north.

Approach:

Lodge. Situated on the north side of the drive where it meets Heath Lane on the east of the site. It is of dark red brick with red brick banding and dressings under a tiled roof. Of two storeys with a circular shingled turret, it is a picturesque entrance to the Cemetery

The drive from the lodge ascends the hill in a straight line to the 2 chapels visible from the gates and is made of patched asphalt, weedy at the edges.

Memorials: A pink granite obelisk to Edward Arthur Ambler FRCS, senior surgeon at West Herts Infirmary, was erected by public subscription after his death in 1879. It dominates the first crosspaths at the entrance to the cemetery. Most grave markers are of simple shaped headstone or cross varieties. Few have kerbstones around the edge of the individual plots

Burial Grounds: This was laid out in a regular fashion with a rounded-corner square carriage drive around the sides of the cemetery with footpaths running north-south to the west of the lodge. The drives meet in a circus at the centre which was formerly planted with trees and shrubs but currently has three short trees.

Flower beds flank the entrance drive from the lodge to the first crosspaths.

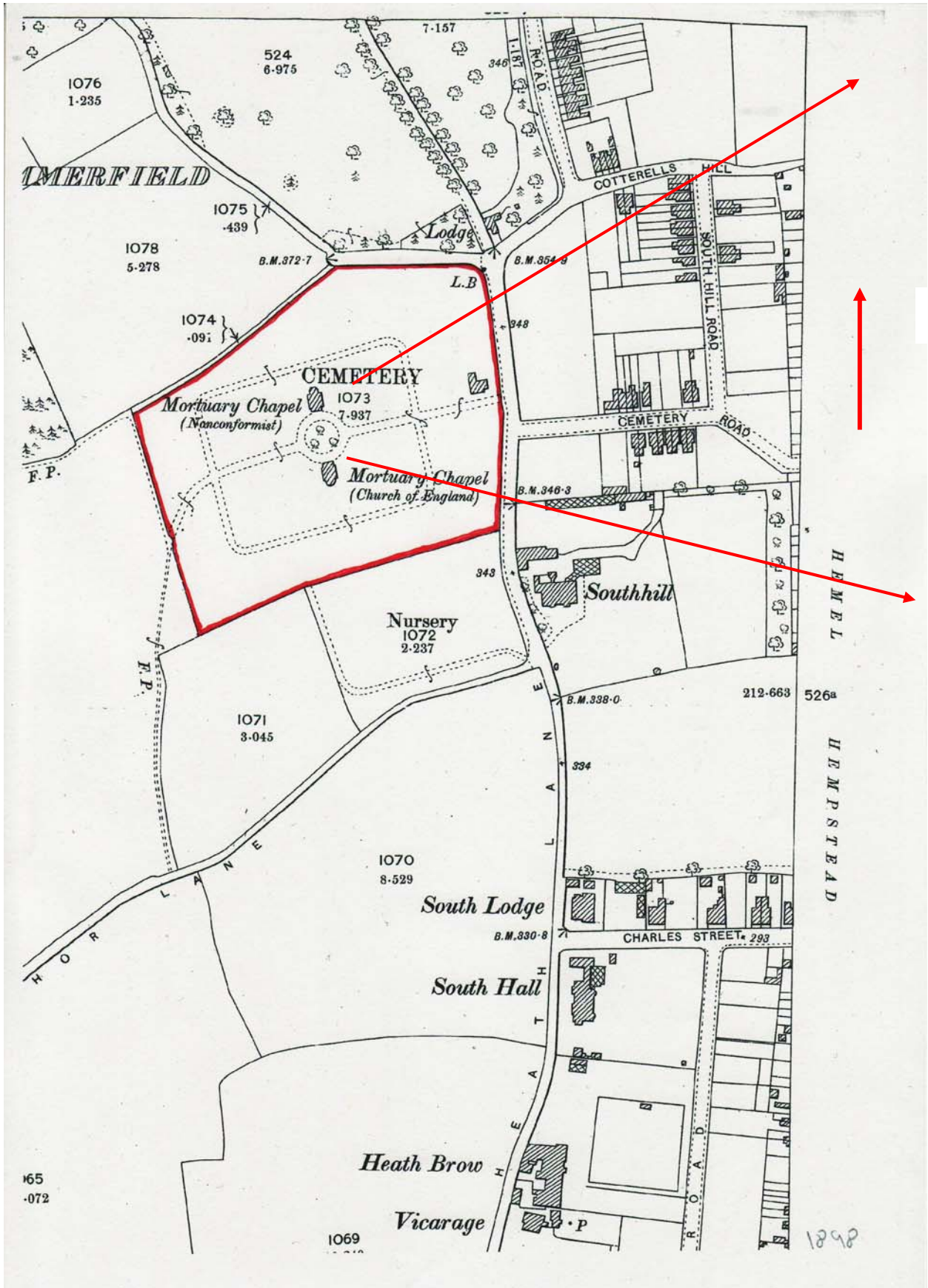
The southern part of the cemetery is consecrated for Anglian burials. The northern part for Non-conformists. A small section at the eastern side is reserved for Roman Catholics.

Boundaries: The perimeter is now bounded by a 3-4 foot wall to the east where it curves round to the entrance gates, and stepped down with the fall of the land along Lockers Park Lane to the north. Other boundaries are fenced with black iron railings

Trees: The boundary at Lockers Park Lane has a screen of mature Lime trees behind the wall, the Heath Lane boundary has a mixed hedge of about high. The other boundaries have trees and self-sown scrub adjoining the railings.

Trees: Within the ground there are a number of specimen trees such as willow (*salix* spp), cedar (*cedrus libani*), pines, redwoods, all typical of late 19th century planting. A specimen tree has been planted in the centre of each of the four inner quarters but that in the north-east corner has disappeared. There are yews (*taxus baccata*), traditional to cemeteries which appear to have outgrown some earlier attempt at topiary. The west carriage drive is flanked by an avenue of stunted, pollarded Limes (*Tilia Europea* x).

<p>Important people associated with site: Architect/Designer : Henry Edward Coe, Stephen Robinson Memorial: Edward Ambler, General Surgeon, West Herts Infirmary</p>
<p>Assessment of significance: The first Municipal Cemetery in Dacorum, this is a good example of late Victorian cemetery with its regular layout, set of chapels and lodge in a gothic vernacular style and use of specimen trees, including some magnificent Redwoods.</p>
<p>Principal Uses: Burial</p>
<p>Public Access/Rights of Way: Open</p>
<p>Designations: (e.g. Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Area, Listed Buildings, EH Register of Historic Parks & Gardens, Tree Preservation Orders, SSSIs, Nature Reserve, National Trust, County Wildlife Site, etc) Dacorum 'Open Land': Policy 116</p>
<p>Sources of information:</p>
<p>Site visited by: Hertfordshire Gardens Trust Date: 2009</p>



Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 1898 Sheet XXXIII.II. Scale: 25":1 mile