

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER PROFILE

St Mary's Conservation Area

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The St. Mary's Conservation Area Character Profile was approved by the Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee on 13th July 1998 as supplementary planning guidance. If you have any queries regarding this profile or wish to carry out works in the conservation area please contact Environment Department reception on 020 8753 1083.

Design and Conservation
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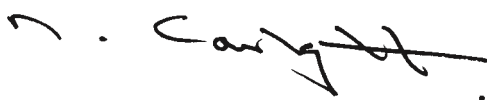
FOREWORD



The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham is fortunate enough to have 45 conservation areas covering almost half the Borough. These have been designated in recognition of the importance of the historic and architectural heritage in our Borough. As Deputy for Environment and Contract Services, I am committed to the preservation of these areas with the help of residents and local groups, so that they continue to enhance the quality of life in the Borough and so that they survive as good examples of our heritage for future generations.

This Profile describes the special character of the St. Mary's Conservation Area identifying buildings of note, interesting historic facts and showing how the buildings and open spaces work together to create an environment worthy of protection.

I would like to thank all local groups who helped to prepare these Profiles, in particular the Hammersmith and Fulham Historic Buildings Group under the dedicated leadership of Angela Dixon and the Hammersmith Society. Through the consultation process the documents have evolved to represent not only officers' assessments of the conservation areas, but those of the local amenity societies and residents groups active in each area. I hope these Profiles will now provide extra assistance in the stewardship and preservation of what is best in the Borough.



Councillor Michael Cartwright
Deputy for Environment and Contract Services

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states:-

"Every local authority shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and shall designate those areas as conservation areas."

The Borough has 45 such areas designated over 31 years, of which St Mary's Conservation Area is one.

1.2 Under Section 71 of the Act, once an area has been designated:-

"It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas."

1.3 The Council is doing this in stages. The first stage is this document which is called a Conservation Area Character Profile. The "profile" is an appraisal which aims to give a clear assessment of the special interest, character, and appearance which justified the designation of the area as a Conservation Area. It also includes some broad design guidelines which will aid all concerned in their efforts to preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area.

1.4 It is intended that each profile document will provide a sound basis, defensible on appeal, for the development plan policies and development control decisions, and for the guidance of residents and developers.

1.5 It will also form the groundwork for subsequent Conservation Area Studies. The next stage will be the production of more detailed design guidelines where necessary in consultation with Councillors, the Hammersmith and Fulham Historic Buildings Group, Hammersmith Society and other local groups. These will be followed by the preparation of policy documents for the preservation or enhancement of the conservation area, which will be the subject of local consultation.

1.6 The profiles and subsequent design guidelines will form supplementary planning guidance and will support the Council's statutory Unitary Development Plan which sets out the planning policy framework for the development of the borough and development control decisions. Policy EN2 relates to conservation areas and makes specific reference to the Character Profiles. They will constitute material planning considerations in the determination of planning applications.

1.7 The Government's document (PPG 15) "Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment" advises local authorities on how to operate the legislation, emphasising that:-

"It is the quality and interest of areas, rather than that of individual buildings, which should be the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas. There has been increasing recognition in recent years that our experience of a historic area depends on much more than the quality of individual buildings - on the historic layout of property boundaries and thoroughfares; on a particular 'mix' of uses; on characteristic materials; on appropriate scaling and detailing of contemporary buildings; on

the quality of advertisements, shopfronts, street furniture and hard and soft surfaces; on vistas along streets and between buildings; and on the extent to which traffic intrudes and limits pedestrian use of spaces between buildings. Conservation area designation should be seen as the means of recognising the importance of all these factors and of ensuring that conservation area policy addresses the quality of townscape in its broadest sense as well as the protection of individual buildings."

1.8 This intention is reinforced by English Heritage in their document "Conservation Area Practice" which recognises that:-
"As the number of conservation areas continues to grow, the criteria for their designation are being looked at more critically."

It is, therefore, even more important than before that there should be a clear definition, recorded in some detail, of what constitutes the special architectural or historic interest which warranted the designation of every conservation area.

1.9 The designation of an area as a Conservation Area has other benefits beyond the protection of buildings and the design of the area. It enables other policies such as biodiversity and smarter streets to be developed for the conservation area, and acts as a focus for the formation and development of Residents Associations and Neighbourhood Watch

1.10 So, in line with the guidance given by both the Government and English Heritage, this conservation area profile will aim to define the character of the conservation area on the basis of an analysis of all or some of the following criteria :-

- ✧ origins and development of the street patterns, the lie of the land;
- ✧ archaeological significance and potential of the area, including any scheduled ancient monuments;
- ✧ architectural and historic quality, character and coherence of the buildings, both listed and unlisted, and the contribution which they make to the special interest of the area;
- ✧ character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality;
- ✧ prevalent and traditional building materials for buildings, walls and surfaces;
- ✧ contribution made to the character of the area, and to biodiversity, by greens or green spaces, trees, hedges and other natural or cultivated elements;
- ✧ prevailing (or former) uses within the area and their historic patronage, and the influence of these on the plan form and building types;
- ✧ relationship of the built environment to landscape / townscape including definition of significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas, where appropriate;
- ✧ extent of any loss, intrusion, or damage that has occurred since designation;
- ✧ existence of any opportunity sites;
- ✧ unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation area according to English Heritage's criteria.

2 DESIGNATION

2.1 St Mary's Conservation Area was designated on 10th April 1989 to protect the many fine memorials and chapel buildings.

3 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

3.1 St Mary's Conservation Area lies very close to the northern extremity of the Borough and comprises Alma Place, St Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery and a portion of Kensal Green Cemetery which extends into the adjoining borough. Its boundaries follow the cemetery walls to the north and west and the bank of the Grand Union Canal to the south, which forms an adjoining conservation area.

3.2 The east boundary is administrative rather than physical, being the Borough boundary. Though defined by marker stones it does not visually separate the conservation area from the rest of the cemetery in the adjoining Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Kensal Green Cemetery Conservation Area. The St. Mary's Conservation Area cemeteries occupy an area of approximately 50% of the total cemetery area (77 acres) in both Boroughs.

3.3 The conservation area boundary can be seen on the plan on pages 16 and 17.

4 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AREA

4.1 When the land for the cemetery was acquired and laid out, Kensal was countryside. The establishment of a cemetery here was the long overdue response to more than a century of

agitation by medical men and other reformers over the deplorably congested condition of the urban churchyards and crypts in which the community buried its dead.

4.2 In 1830 a group of public-spirited gentlemen met and set steps in motion, which led to the formation of the General Cemetery Company. Various possible locations were carefully considered, including Primrose Hill, before farmland was purchased between the Harrow Road and the canal to accommodate the thoughtful response to unhygienic and primitive conditions within the metropolis.

4.3 The Company's shares were soon taken up, and they obtained an Act of Parliament to assist with their endeavours. Their land was very quickly enclosed to form Kensal Green Cemetery (All Souls) so that the business of burying could get under way while a considered design for buildings and layout could be prepared.

4.4 The design and amenity came high on the Directors' priorities. Continental examples were studied, (in particular Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, which had opened in 1804), learned debate ensued in the press and an architectural competition was promoted to find a dignified and uplifting design for the buildings and layout of the cemetery.

4.5 After squabbles and challenged decisions of the sort that so often bedevil architectural competitions a victor emerged, William Chadwick, who it is suggested was in effect developing in detail a design and style promoted more generally by Sir John Dean Paul, chairman of the Company.

4.6 The separate western part of the Conservation Area is the Roman Catholic Cemetery of St. Mary's, which seems to have been established in west London to complement St. Patrick's Cemetery, Leytonstone in the east. The designs for its layout were by Samuel J. Nicholl, and its consecration (in 1859) was some quarter of a century later than that of the other. Ground levels have been, and continue to be, raised to enable burials to continue in a seemly way in the southern part of this cemetery. Some burials have also recently taken place within the original pathways of the less used older parts of the cemetery. Further burials should not be allowed to compromise the principle routes and vistas of the cemetery, particularly the ceremonial route to the War Memorial.

4.7 Alma Place, a small terrace of houses built around 1860, is tucked into the space between the lodge and gates of St Mary's Cemetery to the south and the terrace fronting Harrow Road to the north. It forms the northernmost part of the conservation area.

5 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

5.1 The two cemeteries are defined as areas of Metropolitan Open Land in the Council's Unitary Development Plan. In association with the adjoining Grand Union Canal, they are also Nature Conservation Areas of Metropolitan Importance as recommended by the London Ecology Unit. Kensal Green Cemetery is also included as Grade II* on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The area is divided into two parts of distinct and contrasting characters by a substantial

wall, and shrub planting along the line of the boundary between the cemeteries. The cemeteries share a common approach from the Harrow Road with attractive gateways and lodges. Railway lines just north of the area tunnel under the entrance, and under the front gardens of Alma Place, which are included in the conservation area.

5.2 The simple description 'cemetery' obscures the range of uses within the area. Over those parts of the cemeteries where no, or negligible, burial rights remain the use is limited to visual amenity, sitting and contemplation. In contrast, the crematorium and its immediate setting remains in appropriate use, that for which it was designed.

5.3 The conservation area can be split into sub-areas for the purposes of the character assessment in order to distinguish areas of similar character as shown on Plan 1.

These are defined as:-

- A All Souls Cemetery, Kensal Green
- B St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery
- C Alma Place

A All Souls Cemetery, Kensal Green

5.4 Kensal Green Cemetery is owned and managed by the original General Cemetery Company. Established in 1832 and consecrated on 24th January 1833, it is the oldest surviving purpose-built commercial London Cemetery. This is a romantic and picturesque landscape with curving avenues and diverse planting, creating a complex series of spaces which contribute so much to the character of All Souls. The landscaping was designed and carried out in the spirit of John Nash's Regents Park and Regency town planning and landscape schemes by his pupil Thomas Liddell.

Most of the original buildings of the General Cemetery Company, including the catacombs, dissenters chapel and entrance gateway and offices, were built within the eastern part of the cemetery, so are beyond this conservation area and the Borough boundary.

5.5 It seems to have been the case that many of the "great and good" were attracted to make use of the facilities of the new necropolis. The design intentions among other things encouraged the erection of tombs and memorials of artistic merit to complete the landscape and provide stimulus for reflection. Much national history is reflected in the often extensive and surprisingly legible inscriptions on these memorials.

5.6 Sculpture and all architectural styles were encouraged and in many instances the response was a design of vigour and gusto. There are a great variety of high quality monuments from over the years spanning the whole range of Victorian taste. These include Egyptian obelisks and monuments, Greek temples, Neo-Classical canopies, Gothic chapels, Celtic crosses, sarcophagi, massive ledgers, urns and angels. These are rich in symbolism and embrace a diverse range of stone, metal and glass.

5.7 The 'Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery'¹ have published a select list of notable monuments. They draw attention to several memorials within the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

The tomb of Marigold Frances Churchill (15th November 1918 - 23rd August 1921), an infant daughter of Sir Winston and Clementine Churchill, is listed Grade II.



It is in the form of an exquisitely lettered Hopton Wood pedestal inscription by Eric Gill, on a hammered base, which was originally surmounted by an octagonal shaft with a relief of the crucifixion. This was stolen in 1992 and replaced with a small white cross.



The tomb of George Grossmith (1847-1912), comedian, entertainer and singer of light

opera, who 'created' many of the leading roles of Gilbert & Sullivan, and was joint author of "The Diary of a Nobody", is in the form of a white cross.



The tomb of Sir Terence Rattigan (1911-77) playwright, whose ashes were brought from Bermuda where he died, and laid in the family grave, which is in the form of a large white cross with white stone trelliswork surround. However, his name is not recorded on the memorial.

5.8 Two other statutory listed tombs are located within the Hammersmith and Fulham part of the cemetery.

The tomb of Maria Tustin (died 27th January 1914), is listed Grade II. It is in the form of a carrara marble statue of a serenely posed seated medieval woman on a base of red granite decorated at the corners with pressed metal torches.

The tomb of Alexandrina and Herbert Allingham (both died 1904), is also listed Grade II. This is an exceptional example



of cemetery sculpture, expressing the fullest of anguished emotions. It is in the form of a carrara marble monument which has a base with squat pilasters between which is a recess containing a miniature recumbent statue of Alexandrina with her disconsolate lap dog stretched within the crook of her arm. Above this is a central inscribed pediment flanked by

wreaths, and above them an elegant figure of a grieving angel embracing a broken column, a funeral wreath hanging listlessly from one hand.

5.9 The principal building of the company to be located in Hammersmith and Fulham is the West London Crematorium and its Chapels, built in 1938-39. This is an important feature in the conservation area and is a building of particular interest that has remained relatively unaltered and retains particularly fine windows. It is an austere and yet serene composition designed by Gerald Berkeley Wills that is of considerable dignity and continues the Classical theme of the cemetery buildings in a style reminiscent of the work of Lutyens or of Schinkel.



Built in a pinkish brick, it has stone detailing including window surrounds and columns. It consists of a tall central entrance hall, (originally open, now enclosed by glazed screens), with a chapel on each side and extends beyond into a terrace on the south side with arcaded loggias.

The entrance hall has a barrel vaulted ceiling glazed with small square lights, which flood the courtyard below with natural light. It is approached from north



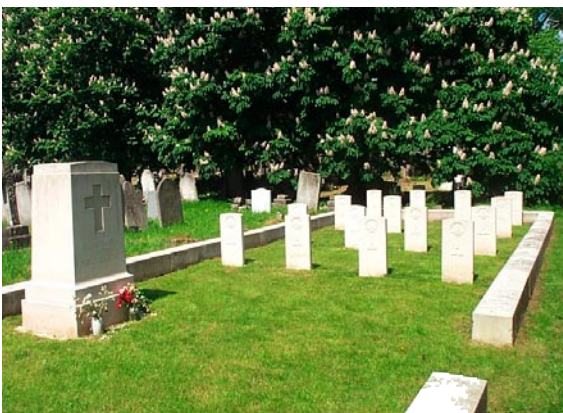
and south through giant Ionic columns in a distyle 'in antis' arrangement (2 columns between pilasters), the frieze over the main entrance having the incised Latin inscription 'MORS JANUA VITAE' (Death the Gateway of Life). Much of the wall space of the paved entrance courtyard has been given over to small simple memorial tablets of a uniform rectangular design. The chapels on each side also have curved ceilings, the one to the east was enriched with oak panelling and a marble bier for the opening of the crematorium, but the one on the west side was not fitted out and brought into use until 1996.



To the south the courtyard is extended into a terrace flanked by two open arcaded loggias, which are lined with more memorial tablets. The architectural composition relates to an axis through landscaped garden features designed by Edward White, the former President of the Institute of Landscape Architects, that are also of the Mid 20th Century, and were based on a rose garden centred on a small pool with a fountain, which has since been replaced by a paved area and sundial.

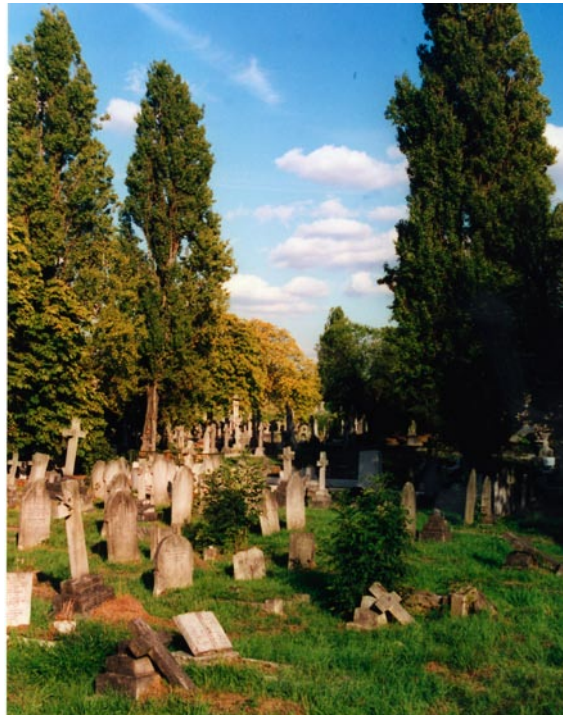


To the south of the crematorium garden is a further secluded garden and a war memorial and cemetery, and beyond this, through a shady avenue, near the southern boundary is a 1914-18 Colonial war memorial and cemetery commemorating servicemen from South Africa, Canada and Australia.



5.10 Trees and shrubs play a dominant role in establishing the character and appearance of the General Cemetery

Company's land. The park-like views help comfort the bereaved, and its diversity, with woodland, scrub, tall herbs, vegetated monuments and grassland with scattered trees is acknowledged as being of Metropolitan significance. However, there is need for additional screen planting adjacent to the crematorium carpark.



5.11 Neglect and decay are taking their toll in much of the area, to the detriment of the monuments, yet in visual terms the effect is in many ways attractive. The contrast with areas of more recent, and better maintained formal garden design around the crematorium enhances both. However the introduction of kerbs or edging stones along the now predominantly informally detailed drives and avenues strikes a visually jarring note.

B St Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery

5.12 The character of this cemetery is different to that of the adjacent Kensal Green Cemetery. The openness of St Mary's Cemetery ² is its most striking