Some European approaches to twentieth-century cemetery design: continental solutions for British dilemmas

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ABSTRACT When considering British cemetery design, it is the grand schemes of the early nineteenth century which are widely understood to be the finest design examples even though not all are still in use as cemeteries and in spite of the fact that many have been severely neglected and vandalized. They provide us with a legacy of what can be achieved when appropriate resources are available and where there is a will to create something of distinction. Unfortunately in British twentieth-century cemeteries this view has rarely been adopted. This is in contrast with continental Europe where there continues to be a strong tradition of high standard design and maintenance. This paper selects five inspiring examples which help to illustrate how different design approaches respond to social change, changing attitudes towards nature, landscape context and as a place for burial. Each of these schemes is evaluated and some conclusions are drawn which may help to contribute to the debate on cemetery design.

Introduction

By the middle of the twentieth century the emerging landscape architecture profession had already highlighted its concerns and frustrations with recent British cemetery design and management. These concerns, many of which are still valid, are recorded in a number of articles written between 1935 and 1945 and published in the professional periodical for landscape architects. An article written in 1945 entitled ‘What is wrong with our cemeteries?’ comments on the lack of planning in the design of cemeteries and of the unsatisfactory appearance of ‘acres of variegated marble’ (Batten, 1945: 5). Other articles deal with similar issues and express concern about the impact of imported stone memorials on the visual coherence of cemeteries and churchyards and, perhaps not surprisingly, of a need to involve trained professionals in cemetery design and management. Design approaches that might accommodate changes in taste while providing a clear sense of cohesion and identity to the overall scheme are also suggested (Mawson, 1935; Eeles, 1945). Yet despite the concerns raised and solutions
proposed, recent investigations into British cemeteries would suggest that there has been little or no improvement. Reports identify a loss of specialist skills and knowledge replaced by

a rather woolly and generalist ‘leisure management’ philosophy, neither rooted in any kind of specialist training (horticulture or landscape architecture, for example) or any kind of local knowledge and embeddedness (local history, social history, soil types, distinctive flora and fauna) (Worpole, 1997: 16).

An earlier study into the management of old cemetery land identified the diminished status of cemetery authorities, which were seen to be ‘fast becoming a forgotten service in local authorities’ (Dunk & Rugg, 1994: 61). One of the issues underlying the poor quality of design and maintenance in Britain as opposed to its continental neighbours is the lack of a system ensuring appropriate funding for this purpose. In other countries this is resolved by ongoing rental charges for individual graves or by means of re-use of graves (Centennial Park Cemetery Trust, 1990).

This paper explores what is possible when design is valued and appropriate resources are made available. It seeks to identify ways in which design can help create cemetery landscapes that are uplifting and able to respond to societies’ changing needs without compromising the integrity of the original design. It also looks at examples which are distinctive and which demonstrate how a cemetery can offer more to society than simply being a place for burial. Such an approach is of course not new, and had been applied to nineteenth-century cemeteries, under very different social conditions, as exemplified by the various case studies of recent years (for example, Curl, 2001). The twentieth century has been covered much more sparsely however and there are limited reviews of recent landscape design approaches. The examples used in this paper have been taken from continental Europe and represent different periods from the twentieth century. They are all, or have been, icons of their time but while most of these cemeteries are well known and often quoted in publications on design, many of the analyses have an art historical bias. As such, the analyses are preoccupied with design references and relationships with other examples, rather than investigating how and why certain design decisions have been taken and why those decisions are important. Within the scope of this paper it is not possible to provide detailed design analyses for entire sites. Instead, aspects that have especially influenced the appearance of the cemeteries have been highlighted. The examples have been arranged in a chronological manner enabling developments to be followed more easily. Some of the issues explored include how cemetery design can contribute to the open space structure of the city and thus be of importance for recreation and ecology. Other issues include the way designers have responded both to local history and to the existing nature of the landscapes where the cemeteries are laid out, and the implication of how the design and organization of the cemetery meets the needs of the bereaved and of visitors, as well as those responsible for the day-to-day management.
South Cemetery, Enskede, Stockholm, Sweden by Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz (1915–1940)

In 1915 a design competition was held for the proposed site for Stockholm’s new South Cemetery, an area of existing pine forest, with three gravel pits where the site bordered Sockenvägen, a tributary to the main Stockholm Road. The winning competition entry for the cemetery was by Gunnar Asplund (1885–1940) and Sigurd Lewerentz (1885–1975) and entitled Tallum, which successfully transferred a German concept into the Swedish context. The German idea of a woodland cemetery first arose as a response against the impoverished appearance of many municipal cemeteries at the beginning of the twentieth century (Constant, 1994). The first example of this style was designed by Hans Grässel in Munich and the type rapidly gained popularity in the Germanic countries. From a description in 1912 by Professor Emil Högg for a new woodland cemetery at Bielefeld one can begin to appreciate the sentimental and emotional attraction that was attributed to this new style of cemetery design:

The woodland cemetery! Thus feels the German, this is the liberation of the grey depressing mess of the modern burial place. To return the beloved to the earth in the green German woodlands, one’s own grave protected and sheltered under waving canopies, that is what we subconsciously have always desired (Högg, 1987: 62).

While nationalistic overtones seem to reserve this type of cemetery for Germany, in fact the most famous example was implemented in Stockholm, where the concept fitted comfortably in the national romantic ideals of the times. Tallum was a made up word from tall meaning pine tree and Tallom, the name of the villa in Stocksund designed by Lars Israel Wahlman. One of the key references of the Swedish national romanticism movement, the villa had the appearance of a traditional Swedish log cabin, yet was fully contemporary (Johansson, 1996). This link between traditional values and modernity, was fully exploited by the designers in a design process which occupied them for the next 25 years (Constant, 1994). The progress of the design can be reconstructed from the series of sketches and plans produced by the architects, and by analysis of the implemented scheme.

A stone wall, as traditionally found around Nordic cemeteries, built by the unemployed in the 1930s, surrounds the site. At the main entrance there is a generous semi-circular widening on Sockenvägen (road). Here the top of the wall is overhung by low-branched bushy trees, which creates a funnel into the site. An inbuilt portico of a nymphaeum on the left-hand side of the entrance funnel guides the visitor into the site (Figure 1). At this point an open space beyond becomes visible; this widens out into a gently sloping lawned area which ascends to reveal, on the skyline, a Christian cross and beyond, the open portico of the Holy Cross Chapel. To the right of the cross the landform continues to rise to the Meditation Grove, a knoll on which is located a seating area enclosed by a low wall and weeping elms. These elements combine to create an image of powerful unity, and
one that has become an icon to the modern movement for its apparent, but deceptive, minimalist treatment (Figure 2).

There is no dominant avenue directly to the chapel, as the carriageways lead the visitor to both the left and the right, away from this picture. There is no clutter of gravestones, and one arrives at a clean, serene scene, the purpose of which is contemplative; this is impressively powerful. The topography of this area of the

![Figure 1. 1940 plan by Gunnar Asplund of entrance area of the Stockholm Woodland Cemetery. (Swedish Museum of Architecture).](image)

![Figure 2. View towards Holy Cross Chapel with the Meditation Grove to the right. Photo: Jan Woudstra.](image)
former gravel pit has been used to its utmost advantage to create this scene. In order to achieve this, the architects were unable to propose an entrance purely perpendicular to the road, but instead retained the original angle of the road alignment to the old quarry. This acute angle was maintained even when the entrance was repositioned slightly to the west. This enabled the proposed building on the mounding beyond to be positioned to the greatest advantage in creating a dramatic effect. The architects therefore understood the sense of proportion and weighting for the scene they had created. At a practical level it also enables the pedestrian to take a separate journey from the funeral cortège which sweeps to the right and beyond the mound to an area of parking contained by birch planting.

The walk which leads up to Holy Cross Chapel, ‘the Way to the Cross’, is of a comfortable width for two or three pedestrians ascending abreast and has been paved with irregular stone slabs, of the same type of stone used elsewhere for walling. The path follows the Urn Grove to left, edged on this side by a modern cream rendered wall with copper capping, which follows the landform. This wall is overhung by weeping elms, a traditional symbol of cemeteries until the introduction of Dutch elm disease, although here they are still surviving. Together these elements form a more cultivated appearance in contrast to what lies beyond and thereby naturally lead up to the chapel. Before reaching the main chapel ‘of the Holy Cross’, the pedestrian passes two smaller chapels which are connected to the main chapel. The crematorium is screened by these buildings and lies out of view. At the top, in front of the Chapel of the Holy Cross which dominates this area, the Reflecting Pool (a lily pond) and outdoor ceremonial area, are suddenly revealed. This area had up until this point been hidden from view by the careful manipulation of the landform. The ceremonial area might be seen as a reference to early Christians, who in Sweden sometimes preached out in the open (Figure 3).

Beyond this entrance area and intersected by tracks lies the pine forest, which already existed on the site and provides the main areas for burial. Here lies the Woodland Chapel, a building whose appearance draws from a vernacular style of native building materials and techniques, yet that also has columns, providing a subtle classical reference. The interior of the Chapel is undoubtedly modern but similarly is constructed with reference to ancient symbolism with its use of Doric columns. This is in marked contrast to the later Chapel of the Holy Cross, which is a statement of modernity with its form reflecting a classical temple. One of the main tracks ‘Seven Wells Alley’ leads up to the Resurrection Chapel, which is a neo-classical building but with a modern interior. In the woodlands lie some family graves covered by mounds and a mortuary similarly earth-covered, a clear reference to the ancient Nordic burial mounds. Thus this landscape provides various layers of symbolism, with both ancient, classical and vernacular references.

The most striking aspect of this scheme is the level of thought that has been given to all stages of its development and implementation. This continuity has been possible because the involvement of the designers has been maintained throughout the lengthy establishment of the cemetery. There is a simple elegance about the landscape that is intimately interwoven with the architecture, which is due to the fact that the designers were responsible for all aspects of the design. The
narrative that it explores is taken from the landscape into the buildings and from the buildings back into the landscape. The designers draw from the qualities of the existing landscape in response to contouring and planting. To replicate the impact of mature woodland would otherwise have taken a lifetime. The open character of the woodland cemetery could be vulnerable to changes in taste reflected in the marking of graves. Fortunately this change in memorialization has not happened and graves continue to be marked by a traditional headstone or with a metal or wooden cross. This consistency may partly be due to regulation, but perhaps it is because people recognize the beauty and simplicity of what already exists. Utilitarian elements such as areas for bins and water troughs are also included, and appropriately located to enable uses to access these facilities. These elements are also treated as a design opportunity and consequently elevate the experience and quality of the entire design. The simplicity of the approach has enabled the design to be efficiently managed.

Mariebjerg Cemetery, Copenhagen, Denmark by G.N. Brandt (1925–1936)

Soon after it was finished, the architect Steen Eiler Rasmussen described Mariebjerg Cemetery in a book chapter entitled ‘Modesty a virtue’ as an assembly of a series of apparently low-key approaches to design. In this context it is perhaps
not surprising that he considered this cemetery as a counterpart to the Stockholm Woodland Cemetery in that it expressed 'idealized Danish nature' as opposed to the Swedish equivalent (Rasmussen, 1940: 176–181; Stephensen, 1993, 2001).

The area proposed for the new municipal cemetery to the north of Copenhagen consisted of 25 hectares of open agricultural land with an existing garden in the south east corner. In his design the landscape architect Gudmund Nyeland Brandt (1878–1945) attempted to create a cemetery which did not leave anything to coincidence and appeared 'harmonic' or coherent from its early existence. The initial problems for a new cemetery were defined by the designer as what to do with the large areas of unused land, whilst also providing a dignified burial environment. Brandt responded to this by imposing a path network in a grid system, into which one large and one smaller rectangle were emphasised by avenue planting, connected by two parallel east-west axes (Figure 4). The individual squares were planted with woodland vegetation, with the intention of a future two-phased clearance, as more burial space was required. Graves were to be placed within the areas that were cleared. The ultimate aim was to retain a five-metre-wide belt of fast growing trees and shrubs that had been planted around the square. The cemetery

\[\text{Figure 4. Plan of G.N. Brandt's design for Mariebjerg Cemetery (Rasmussen, 1940: 117).}\]
was composed of many such squares, which together with the avenues and tree belts provided the strong framework and overall wooded character. Irregular and undulating areas along the sides were left and designed for special purposes, such as urn burial without markers, or graves marked with small boulders.

This treatment provided an answer to potential problems of individual memorialization; even in instances when these were ugly, once seen within the context of the overall landscape they remained subservient and did not make any significant impact. This approach also enabled successive generations of designers to propose different treatments for the interiors of the squares and to reflect contemporary fashion without detracting from the overall design (Figure 5). The impression therefore is of a wooded site, with the character determined by the avenues: the main East-West axis was planted with a double avenue of elm (removed in 1997 as a consequence of Dutch elm disease); the second avenue with multi-stemmed white willows and the ‘square’ avenues with hornbeam for the inner avenue and Scots pine for the outer one. These variations in planting, with their own distinctive character, assist the visitor in orientating themselves within this relatively flat and enclosed cemetery. While Brandt initially proposed that the east side of the main elm avenue should be the location for a crematorium, this did not materialise and it was later positioned in the south-east corner in the area of the former garden, a more prominent position near the main entrance. The

**Figure 5.** Within the regular plan of Mariebjerg Cemetery there is great variation in the design and maintenance of the respective areas.

*Photo: Jan Woudstra.*
crematorium was designed by Frits Schlegel as an experimental concrete building in 1936–7. This change in approach enabled the former garden areas around the crematorium to be dedicated to urn burial, and heightened the surprise of the main avenue, which ensured a clearly legible approach route for the cortège. Instead of a neoclassical arrangement of placing the crematorium centrally on the head of the main avenue, the eccentric position gave the site a more modern appearance.

Local tradition influenced the design detail: for example, the cemetery was surrounded with a boulder wall, traditionally used to surround Danish cemeteries. The main entrance (now diverted) was of a simple design and later had to be relocated to the west side due to construction of a new motorway. Unlike the Stockholm Woodland Cemetery the designer did not have the opportunity to work with existing mature woodland or use the topography to create vistas and to control views. Planting is the key to the success of this scheme. It has been used not only to create an overall sense of structure into which burial and changes in taste can be accommodated, but also to improve legibility. In this essentially flat and enclosed site the use of different plant groupings and maintenance regimes is a valuable aid to assist the visitor in orientating themselves within the cemetery.

General Cemetery, Doorn, The Netherlands by Wim Boer (1952–1958)

The General Cemetery in Doorn was a Dutch answer to the concept of the woodland cemetery; it was the result of a 1952 competition, won by the landscape architect Wim Boer (1922–2000). Boer was the son of a Boskoop nurseryman, but in the post-war period he was inspired by modern landscape design, of which he was one of the foremost proponents (Woudstra, 2001). He joined the CIAM, the International Congress of Modern Architecture, and became involved with its members in some of the most progressive designs of the period, including that for Pendrecht, a new neighbourhood in Rotterdam, and Nagele, a modernist village in the Noordoostpolder. Their projects were very much driven by socialist ideals, with strong links to contemporary art. The competition for a new cemetery should be seen within the context of post-war recovery and the desire to establish a modern social democratic society, which was itself becoming increasingly secular. The conditions for the entries included the desire for retention of the existing woodland character, an auditorium to act in the place of a chapel, a columbarium and a small separate area for the Catholic community. The scheme had to be devised so that it could be implemented as and when further space was required (Vroom, 1992).

Boer’s design responded to these conditions in providing a quiet and dignified solution for a modern classless society. The proposals included the creation in the existing pine forest of a series of equally sized rooms, arranged around an approximate H-shaped clearing. Some irregular areas were left within this strong framework; the rectilinear plan is reminiscent of the work of the De Stijl movement, an abstract, non-representational style which had Piet Mondriaan as one of its main proponents (Figure 6). The layout is geometric, but also playful in
the way the designer has varied the arrangement of the basic elements of lawns with hedges and gravestones. Yet the clarity of the overall plan does not overlook the spatial relationship between the various parts and the workings of the site. The layout has been devised with a motor-driven funeral procession firmly in mind. The hearse enters through the gates and arrives at the auditorium, while cars, which have followed the hearse, are directed to the car park. Unlike the larger cemeteries at Mariebjerg and the Stockholm Woodland Cemetery, cars cannot continue into the site. For the Catholic community an elaborate shelter has been devised which is approached via the same entrance, using the same car park; the approach is thus separate without being subservient. The procession continues through the auditorium, and the strong landscape framework whereby the auditorium forms a beacon enabling clear and easy orientation within the cemetery.

Throughout the proposals the landscape architect has kept in mind the basic tenets of a social democracy: classlessness and human equality. These tenets have
been expressed in various ways: there is no hierarchy in spaces, which would have enabled acquisition of dominant plots; the memorial and headstones are subjected to strict regulations which do not allow elaborate monuments; all will be equal in death. All monumentality on the site has been avoided; the entrance gate is subdued, horizontal and minimalist. The auditorium designed by E.F. Groosman, a modernist architect selected by Boer, employs a similar design philosophy as the entrance. The building is initially hidden from view by the wall of the columbarium, which forms part of the composition. A thin wooden cross, placed off centre in front of the wall, is the only Christian symbol on the site. The planting is in keeping with the existing woodland; there are no ornamental species which might traditionally be found in cemeteries. There is thus an avoidance of imposed symbolism, which was not seen as appropriate to an increasingly secular society. Even the main building is referred to as an auditorium and avoids the religious connotations associated with the word chapel.

Unlike the Stockholm Woodland Cemetery where burial takes place beneath the trees, the designer has created open spaces for burial. He has used the existing woodland as an opportunity to impose through clearance a clearly defined geometric pattern informed by the language of the De Stijl movement. This pattern is then reinforced through interplanting of the retained woodland blocks with fir trees to thicken the edges, while yew hedges help to define smaller separate areas within the open spaces. It is particularly interesting to note that this approach could have accommodated greater diversity in individual memorialisation, but has not been necessary as there are significant constraints on the type of memorials used. They are one of two sizes and positioned upright or laid flat in grass. There are no flowers (Figure 7). This approach demonstrates that when there is control over memorialization, there are greater opportunities for a more playful and open treatment of the landscape without detracting from the character of the site. The uniform character and simple elegance of this approach may have been inspired by the contemporary war graves cemeteries, of which they are reminiscent in memorials and landscape treatment. While this cemetery would not appear to address our current concerns for individual freedom which may go beyond the individual choice of memorial to include different religious and cultural approaches to marking visits to the grave by leaving small tokens (Francis et al., 2000), it illustrates that such an egalitarian approach can work well and is visually attractive, creating a restful and dignified place.

**Cemetery Almere-Haven, The Netherlands by Christian Zalm (1975)**

Almere is a Dutch new town with several centres on the west side of the polder of Zuidelijk Flevoland, which was drained in 1968. The first of these centres for which a structure plan was developed was Almere-Haven. The design concept was prepared by the design team Projectburo Almere, which consisted of a group of young ambitious town planners, architects and researchers, most of whom had recently qualified from university. The design team led by Dirk Frielings was democratic, with a common view of rejecting the entrenched patterns of town
planning of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and with ideals and visions for a different world. This resulted in a fusion of new ideas, with heated discussions and an impatience to get these ideals realised. Lelystad, the previous new town in nearby Oostelijk Flevoland, which was built according to modernistic principles, had already been branded a failure. The vision for Almere-Haven was of a traditional Zuiderzee city, which would have developed organically over a long period of time. Contrary to the separation of functions proposed by the modern movement, the design team advocated a mixed use approach. It strove for an integrated urban environment, which incorporated all aspects of human life. In order to create public awareness, acceptance and identity for this new community, the public house and cemetery were the first projects to be implemented.

The young designer Christian Zalm (b.1943) was allocated the task of designing the cemetery. He intended to make the area an integral part of the urban fabric, and a public place. The cemetery was located near the centre of the town at a beautiful spot on the dyke next to the Gooimeer (Gooi lake). The cemetery was created on two artificial mounds of sand placed against the dyke, which were shaped to raise the burial areas above the water level. A cycle path runs between the two burial mounds and forms a link between the town centre and church and adjacent neighbourhood. The auditorium, which is located at the entrance nearest the town centre, presents an enclosed facade to the cycle route and opens out into a small courtyard. A pedestrian route emerges from the rear of the building and

Figure 7. Regulations at the General Cemetery at Doorn allow for two types of headstones, which provides an organised and restful character reminiscent of contemporary war grave cemeteries. Photo: Jan Woudstra.
leads through and around the cemetery, crossing the cycle path in two places. The burial areas are contained in irregular oval shaped hedged ‘rooms’ of various sizes and surround a larger central enclosure. While the outer burial enclosures have only one opening towards the centre, the central enclosure can be accessed at several points (Figure 8).

The designer has described the design language of flowing forms as being a reference to the English landscape style, which intentionally hides boundaries and thus suggests infinity. There is no boundary marking the edge of the cemetery which merges into the landscape. A small old Jewish cemetery in Elburg (a harbour town on the ancient Zuiderzee) served as the main source of inspiration for the design of the burial areas. This cemetery, situated on top of the old city wall, is the size of one of Zalm’s burial enclosures or chambers. Hedges with a height of 1.8 to 2 metres surround the individual burial enclosures and turn inwards towards recessed timber gates. These recesses provide a small separate space before entry into the burial area. The spaces between the burial enclosures have been generously planted with sycamores, which, together with the landform, ensure an intimate atmosphere as a contrast to the surrounding open landscape.

The inclusion of the cycle route through the cemetery is a significant feature of the design (Figure 9). The route enables the cemetery to become a part of the community’s day-to-day experience, which provides a sense of security and an assurance of continuity of life. At a more practical level the hedges help to moderate the microclimate in this exposed landscape. The selection of species for

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**Figure 8.** Chris Zalm’s 1975 plan of Almere-Haven cemetery situated near the town centre and on the dyke of the Gooimeer (Chris Zalm).
the hedges aimed to emulate old Dutch farmyard hedges and mainly consisted of a mixture of deciduous plants including field maple, common lime, hawthorn, oak and hornbeam. Other plants included were guelder rose, dog rose, scotch rose, winter jasmine and holly. The predominance of deciduous plants was to encourage the effect of transparency. During the winter it is only vaguely possible to discern what is happening within the enclosures. No annuals or perennials have been incorporated in the design; these are brought by relatives and mourners who may design the grave and select their own tombstone. Visually such personal freedom to arrange individual graves only works positively with relatively small burial spaces, such as the burial chambers created here. It was considered that ‘limited chaos’ in this situation of rooms with a limited number of graves might be equated with ‘variety’. [1]

Burial commenced first in the outer enclosures with the middle enclosure left until last. This was done in order to encourage other uses, and the central enclosure has long served as a public garden. The design also enabled a specific enclosure to be dedicated to children’s graves and another to urn burials. The early establishment of the cemetery and its use for wider purposes within the community has ensured the position of the cemetery as a landmark. It has become a destination for dog walkers, who can take the paths or continue across the grass to the top of the dyke, and can be appreciated by cyclists on their way to the shops

FIGURE 9. Spaces between the enclosures at the Almere-Haven Cemetery have been planted with sycamores and provide enclosure in a marked contrast to the wide open landscape that surrounds it; a cycle path runs through the middle of the cemetery. Photo: Jan Woudstra.
or to work. But, foremost, it has become a popular place for burial. The cemetery therefore has become a central node, which has reintegrated burial as an aspect of daily life.

Igualada Cemetery, near Barcelona, Spain by Enric Miralles and Carme Pinós (1985)

The Igualada Cemetery opened in 1990 and was the result of a design competition won by Enric Miralles (1955–2000) and Carme Pinós (b. 1954) in 1985. The cemetery has a remarkable context, as it is located at the edge of an industrial estate in a small town near Barcelona. There are no adjacent housing areas but instead the cemetery sits within a rough and deeply eroded river valley, which is colonised by native plants. This dynamic environment is embraced within the design concept. Constructed from concrete, steel, wood and stone filled gabions, the cemetery will, over time, decay and the surrounding vegetation will gradually colonize the site (Figure 10).

Two large gates formed from mild steel, a material that is typically used for reinforcing concrete, mark the entrance to the site. This use of material is surprising, as they immediately challenge our expectations of the physical

Figure 10. A 1985 plan for the Igualada Cemetery by Enric Miralles and Carme Pinós. The site is located in a former quarry on the edge of an industrial estate.
expression of cemeteries. The gates are not refined and dignified but instead appear incomplete and neglected. While passing through the entrance there is a glimpse into the cemetery, which is marked by two steel struts that may be interpreted as two giant crosses, which can be closed to prevent access down into the area of burial niches and tombs (Figure 11) (Zabalbeascoa, 1996). It is intended that the funeral cortège would then proceed to the chapel, which is connected to the mortuary and is positioned to the left of the main entrance where there is also an area for parking. From the chapel the mourners then continue on foot down a steep narrow path which descends into the cemetery passing between smooth concrete walls which define the edge of the burial niches. From within this area the view is almost completely contained with only a glimpse of the surrounding hilltops and ridges. Continuing on, mourners move between the steep sloping columbaria beyond which the cemetery terminates at an open plaza that is contained by a succession of terraces constructed with gabions which are filled with the reclaimed stone from excavated of the site. Built into these terraces are a series of mausoleums, which can be accessed through sliding steel doors (Figure 12). After the committal the mourners leave the cemetery by gradually ascending the sloping ramp that passes through trees and the cruciform gates which were first glimpsed on arriving at the cemetery. There is then just a short walk to the parking area, which is situated near to the entrance by the chapel and mortuary.

FIGURE 11. Entrance to Ingualada Cemetery is constructed of mild steel, which if untreated, has a limited lifespan.
Photo: Andrew Clayden.
This design addresses many of those criteria that have been previously identified. There is a clear and unambiguous response to place and use of the existing landform. By excavating and lowering the burial area the designer has created a sheltered and protected environment which is visually removed from the adjacent industrial estate. The cemetery has been thoughtfully organised with respect to visitor management and burial service. Visitors to the cemetery follow a separate journey into the burial area from the funeral cortège which starts at the chapel. It is also possible to provide the casual visitor with a clear signal that an interment is taking place by closing the cruciform gates which mark the entrance into the area of burial niches. The concept for the design which illustrates the passage of time through the transformation of nature and matter is revealed in the landscape detailing. For example, there are opportunities for plants to colonize the gabion walls and ultimately the concrete floors which incorporate large timber sections which will gradually decay to expose the soil beneath. Lights, commemorative plaques and mausoleum doors are constructed from mild steel and as they slowly oxidise they also reveal transformation of matter and passage of time. As a concept it is striking in the extent to which it rejects the ‘typical’ expression of cemetery design in southern Spain, and is notably different to the other examples that have been reviewed in this paper. This may be partly due to a different cultural, religious and environmental context, but even so as an approach it is worth further investigation. In contrast to the other cemeteries reviewed here.
it adopts an entirely different approach to materials, built and planted, which do not replicate vernacular traditions but are instead very contemporary. With the exception of some tree planting there is little existing vegetation within the cemetery. However the constructed landscape has been designed with the intention that plants will in time play an enhanced role in the evolving character of the cemetery. As an approach to cemetery design one could argue that the Igualada Cemetery is an early form of green burial, a practice which has gained increasing popularity in Great Britain from the mid-1990s (Albery & Wienrich, 2000), in which nature ultimately becomes the collective memorial. For some this solution may not be acceptable but interestingly as an approach to cemetery design it may be very appropriate to the British context where the re-use of graves has not since the mid-nineteenth century been an option (Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, 2001: 34). By incorporating details within the design which will enable the cemetery to anticipate its finite period of use it may be possible to develop a solution which can be affordably maintained and continue provide a valuable resource to the community and the environment.

Conclusions

This paper shows that there is a wide spectrum of approaches to twentieth century cemetery design, which has resulted in radically divergent cemetery landscapes. Some of the factors that have brought about these diverse approaches are ideological, and originate in socialist politics or in design movements such as modernism. While some of these approaches have been noted as the main contributing factors to a particular design, it has not been the purpose of this paper to explore this. Nor has it been the intention to provide comprehensive analyses of entire designs as much more space would have to be dedicated to each example. What the case studies all intended to show relates to the particular strengths of each design. Thus one of the main strengths of the Stockholm Woodland Cemetery is its use of the natural characteristics of the site and the subtle integration of the various buildings, while not overlooking the functionality of the site. The example of Mariebjerg has been particularly highlighted for its creative use of planting as a means of providing a legible landscape framework and varied settings for burial. The General Cemetery in Doorn was chosen because it created a landscape framework out of existing woodland through select tree felling, which is in contrast to the previous two examples. It is also noted for its profound restraint in the use of memorials, which has led to a restful and dignified setting. The cemetery in Almere-Haven is remarkable for its integration of the cemetery in the everyday landscape, and in how the planting reflects a local identity. The Ingualada cemetery is noted for the fact that the design, although by some considered visually challenging, facilitates a dynamic landscape that embraces change.

From each of the cemeteries reviewed there are lessons that may assist in the future design and management of British cemeteries. It is worth noting that of the five cemeteries discussed here, four were the product of design competitions. By
inviting the design community to submit proposals for new cemeteries there is an opportunity to stimulate debate and to explore and discuss different approaches to cemetery design. In doing so, there is also the potential to raise public awareness and interest, which may promote a desire for greater funding for cemeteries and raise the status of burial authorities.

Each of the schemes reviewed also demonstrates the value of a clearly defined concept and masterplan, which sets out a framework for the implementation of the design. In each of the northern European examples, the masterplan has proved to be effective in creating an all-embracing sense of identity into which changes in burial practice and personal memorialisation can be accommodated without detracting from the overall vision. Vegetation has played a key role in achieving this effect. In the case of Mariebjerg, Doorn General Cemetery and Almere-Haven, planting has been used to define the cemetery edge, create separate areas of enclosure and privacy, improve legibility and modify the microclimate. At Almere-Haven the designers have also sought to preserve local identity by selecting species which are typical of the character of the neighbouring landscape. The preservation of the unique qualities of the existing landscape is also a key element in the design of the Stockholm Woodland Cemetery where mature trees have been retained. This approach is in stark contrast to many British cemeteries, which are frequently bland, sparsely planted and have no clear spatial hierarchy.

All these schemes also embrace an attention to detail, which ensures that even the most mundane elements—for example taps, watering troughs, or rubbish bins—are seen as a design opportunity, which contributes to the overall experience. These are the objects with which we come into physical contact and as a consequence to which our attention is drawn. When detailed thoughtfully they can be profound indicators of the quality of the both landscape and its management.

Finally, with the exception of the Igualada Cemetery where the design embraces change through natural processes, each of the designs are maintained in a manner which aims to achieve the objectives of the original design. Cemeteries, like all landscapes, are dynamic environments. If the unique qualities of these designs are to be retained, those who manage them must understand them and they must have access to the appropriate skills and resources to maintain them.

Notes


REFERENCES

**Biographical note**

Andrew Clayden and Jan Woudstra both teach at the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield.