

Cambridge American Cemetery

Cortney Cain Gjesfeld, National Park Service, National Capital Area



Figure 1. Photograph of the Cambridge American Cemetery looking southwest toward the chapel and graves area. (Gjesfeld 2020)

Overview of ABMC Cemeteries in the United Kingdom

The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) is an agency within the executive branch of the United States (US) government that was established by Congress in 1923 to serve as the “guardians of America’s overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials” to honor the service, achievements, and sacrifice of US armed forces.¹ It maintains and operates twenty-six American military cemeteries as well as numerous federal memorials, monuments, and markers in seventeen foreign countries, the US Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the British dependency of Gibraltar. ABMC sites commemorate US war dead from several conflicts, including World War I (WWI) and World War II (WWII). The combined interments and memorializations for both wars total 207,616, while 93,202 interments and 78,985 memorializations are associated specifically with WWII.²

Today, there are two American military cemeteries located in the UK commemorating US war dead from WWI and WWII. These include the Cambridge American Cemetery and the Brookwood

¹ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet (Arlington, Virginia, n.d.), 20.

² American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Commemorative Sites’ booklet (Arlington, Virginia, 2018a), 2.

American Cemetery in Brookwood, located approximately 35 miles southwest of London. The Brookwood American Cemetery contains the interred remains of 468 American military dead from WWI, including forty-one unknown burials. A “wall of missing” is located inside the chapel at Brookwood and includes another 563 names.³ ABMC does not accept new burials within their cemeteries with the exception of the interment of recovered remains of US war dead found associated with WWI and WWII battle grounds.⁴

Cambridge American Cemetery

Location and Setting

The 30.5-acre cemetery is located in East Anglia in the county of Cambridgeshire approximately three miles west of Cambridge in the Parish of Madingley. Positioned in a rural location, the northern boundary of the cemetery is bordered by Cambridge Road with views toward vast agricultural fields, while the eastern extent of the site is situated adjacent to a small farm. The western range of the cemetery is bound by a large ancient broadleaf woodland, known as Madingley Wood that is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The southern extent of the cemetery is characterized by a strip of broadleaf trees, historically known as the Mill Plantation, that serves as a buffer between the reflecting pool and Madingley Road.

Significance

During the post-WWII period in the UK there was an increasing emphasis away from highly designed cemeteries towards the development of burial grounds that provided the greatest utility with the least cost. The Cambridge American Cemetery serves as an “outstanding exception” to the trend serving as a unique example of a post-war military cemetery with very high evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal value.⁵ As the only American WWII cemetery in the UK, the cemetery is a Grade I property (#1001573) and listed in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest. The landscape design was completed by the Olmsted Brothers and the cemetery was dedicated in 1956.⁶ The “Memorial and Attached Walls, Steps and Pool Surround at American Military Cemetery” are Grade II* listed (#1376611) for their special architectural interest.⁷ The buildings were designed by architects Perry Shaw Hepburn and Dean of Boston, Massachusetts. Character-defining features of the cemetery include the formal arrangement of the grave markers and scenic vistas as well as the monumental architecture. Collectively, these features form a striking commemorative landscape that honors the sacrifices of US servicemen and women who lost their lives in WWII.⁸

³ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Brookwood American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet (Arlington, Virginia, 2018b), 10.

⁴ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, n.d., 20.

⁵ Jenifer White, “Paradise Preserved: Registered cemeteries in date order with notes on principal reasons for designation and designers and architects” (English Heritage, 2011), 6.

⁶ Historic England, ‘American Military Cemetery’, last modified November 2009, accessed 12 January 2020, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001573>.

⁷ Historic England, ‘Memorial and Attached Walls, Steps and Pool Surround at American Military Cemetery’, last modified 27 July 2017, accessed 12 January 2020, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1376611>.

⁸ White, ‘Paradise Preserved’, 40-41.

Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects

Between 1857 and 1979, the Olmsted firm was involved in more than 6,000 projects in locations across the globe.⁹ In 1898, John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. created the partnership of Olmsted Brothers. Though John Charles died in 1920 and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. died in 1957, the firm would retain its name until 1961.¹⁰ The most active years for the Olmsted Brothers occurred prior to WWI, while the firm received few commissions in the years following WWII. Edward Clark Whiting (1881-1962) joined the Olmsted Brothers in 1905. He became a partner in 1920 and dedicated his entire professional career to the firm. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, he prepared the landscape designs for the Cambridge American Cemetery.

The *Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm, 1857-1979* identified that the Olmsted firm was involved with the landscape design of 275 cemeteries, rural plots, memorials, and monuments. Many of these projects were completed in the 1920s and were associated with cemeteries and more specifically individual grave plots.¹¹ Throughout their tenure, the Olmsted firm designed very few cemeteries as new projects, but rather the firm's work involved improvements or additions to existing cemeteries and landscapes to accommodate 20th century needs.¹² The Cambridge American Cemetery is the only international cemetery project that the firm undertook.

Perry Shaw Hepburn and Dean, Architects

The architectural firm of Perry Shaw and Hepburn was founded in 1923 and was engaged in an array of academic, civic, residential, and commercial projects around the US. In 1927, the firm was awarded its first large commission, which included both the master planning and restoration of Colonial Williamsburg.¹³ By the 1940s, the firm had become an important contributor to new development in Boston with the commission of several notable buildings around the city. In the 1950s, the renamed firm of Perry Shaw Hepburn and Dean, began to focus on projects associated with colleges and universities. During this period, the firm's designs explored "vernacular influences, International Style simplicity, Brutalist monumentality, reflecting the influences of their specific geographic and historical contexts" .¹⁴ Today, the Cambridge American Cemetery remains as the only known work of Perry Shaw and Hepburn in the UK.¹⁵

⁹ C.E. Beveridge, 'The Olmsted Firm—An Introduction' In *The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm, 1857-1979, 2nd Edition*, edited by L. Lawliss, C. Loughlin, and L. Meier (Washington D.C.: National Association for Olmsted Parks, 2008), 6.

¹⁰ Beveridge, 'The Olmsted Firm', 1.

¹¹ A.A. Levee, 'Cemeteries, Burial Lots, Memorials and Monuments' In *The Master List of Design Projects of the Olmsted Firm, 1857-1979, 2nd Edition*, edited by L. Lawliss, C. Loughlin, and L. Meier (Washington D.C.: National Association for Olmsted Parks, 2008), 249.

¹² Ibid, 250.

¹³ Perry Dean Rogers Partners Architects, 'Office History', accessed 8 March 2020, <http://perrydean.com/office-history>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Beacon Planning Ltd, 'New Interpretive Centre: Cambridge American Military Cemetery – Heritage Statement' (2011), 20-21.

History and Landscape Development of the Cambridge American Cemetery

Early Land Use as a Temporary Cemetery

Throughout the duration of US involvement in WWII, more than 1,600,000 American servicemen and women were based in England.¹⁶ The flat topography characteristic of East Anglia facilitated the construction of nearly 200 landing fields and associated air stations in the region during the war.¹⁷ These facilities played an important role in the strategic bombing campaign against Germany, which contributed to victory of the war in 1945.

During WWII, the US Army created several hundred temporary burial grounds on battlefields in foreign lands.¹⁸ A temporary cemetery, located near Cambridge, was established on the second anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1943, to house the remains of American casualties, including Allied bombers and fighters based in the UK.¹⁹ Memorial Day services were first observed at the site in May 1944.²⁰ After the war ended, the remains of approximately 42 percent of servicemen and women temporarily interred at various locations in England and Northern Ireland were reinterred at the temporary cemetery and by October 1945, 5,500 soldiers were buried at Cambridge.²¹ An aerial photo from 1945 shows the location and configuration of the cemetery, which was oriented north to south and arranged in large blocks that were divided by a central path similar to the symmetrical cemeteries established by the War Department after WWI.²² (Figure 2). Historic photographs show that the blocks were punctuated by rows of neatly spaced white wooden crosses, while the path between the blocks was paved with gravel. A flagpole was located near the car park on Cambridge Road, while the chapel, support buildings, and “court of honor” were located at the northern extent of the property near the Mill Plantation.

¹⁶ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, n.d., 5-6.

¹⁷ McCormick, A. O’Hare, ‘Abroad; England Begins to Miss the Americans,’ *New York Times*, 17 October 1945.

¹⁸ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Commemorative Sites’ booklet, 3.

¹⁹ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, n.d.

²⁰ ‘Britain Will Honor American War Dead’, *New York Times*, 30 May 1944.

²¹ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, n.d., 3-4.

²² E.G. Grossman, ‘Architecture for a Public Client: The Monuments and Chapels of the American Battle Monuments Commission’, in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (May 1984), 121.



Figure 2. Aerial photograph of the temporary cemetery near Cambridge. Note blocks of grave markers divided by walks and the flagpole at the southern end of the site, ca. 1946. (US National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives Identifier: 204845079)

ABMC Overseas Cemeteries

By 1947, 14 overseas locations had been selected to serve as permanent military cemeteries, including the Cambridge site.²³ At this time, families were offered the choice to bury loved ones in established American military cemeteries on foreign soil or be returned to the US for burial (Figure 3). Most families chose repatriation; however, some chose to have their loved ones interred overseas. The US War Department anticipated it would take up two years to relocate all of the remains. Officials planned to begin removing the bodies starting in August 1947 with the first going to Honolulu, Cambridge, and northern France.²⁴

The ABMC adopted a design policy for all of the WWII cemeteries, which included recruiting an American team of professionals such as an architect, landscape architect, sculptor, and mural painter for each cemetery.²⁵ Often the ABMC sought to recruit “the most prominent architects in the country” for these projects.²⁶ While the designs for each of the 14 permanent overseas ABMC cemeteries were highly variable and had no specific limitations (other than cost), each cemetery needed to include the

²³ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Commemorative Sites’ booklet, 3.

²⁴ ‘War Cemetery Group Plans Tour Abroad to Pick Permanent Sites From Present 209’, *New York Times*, 30 December 1946.

²⁵ Markley Stevenson, ‘With the American Battle Monuments Commission’, in *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, October 1951, 9.

²⁶ Grossman, ‘Architecture for a Public Client’, 125.

following components: a small (nonsectarian) devotional chapel; an inscription of the names and details of the missing in the region; and a graphic record (in permanent form) of the services of the troops.²⁷ In 1951, the author (Markley Stevenson) of an article printed in *Landscape Architecture Magazine* noted, “It is my feeling that the World War II cemeteries, while equaling those of World War I in dignity and spirituality, will exceed them in their ‘beauty of the whole,’ and that, if this proves to be true, it will be due in large measure to two factors in their making, 1) the selection of the site, and 2) the teamwork of the designers who created them”.²⁸



Figure 3. Photo showing flag draped coffins of American soldiers at the temporary cemetery near Cambridge, ca. 1944. (US National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives Identifier: 6003746)

Design and Construction of the Cambridge American Cemetery

As early as September 1947, a model of the Cambridge American Cemetery showing many of the existing components of the site had been completed (Figure 4). Plans continued to evolve for the site over the next several years; however, the primary elements of the cemetery had been established by 1947. In February 1948, British officials dedicated the Cambridge American Cemetery as a permanent

²⁷ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, n.d., 21 and ‘Those Honored Dead’, *New York Times*, 25 May 1952.

²⁸ Stevenson, ‘With the American Battle Monuments Commission’, 10.

“bit of the United States”...²⁹ After the ceremony, the cemetery was closed to allow officials from the United States Grave Registry Command to remove the bodies of soldiers whose relatives requested their burial in the US. The Brookwood Cemetery was also closed at this time to facilitate the transfer of the remains of WWII soldiers that were to be permanently interred in Cambridge. It was reported that that the process of disinterment and reinterment would not be finished before the end of summer and that the Cambridge American Cemetery would not reopen until the fall of 1949...³⁰

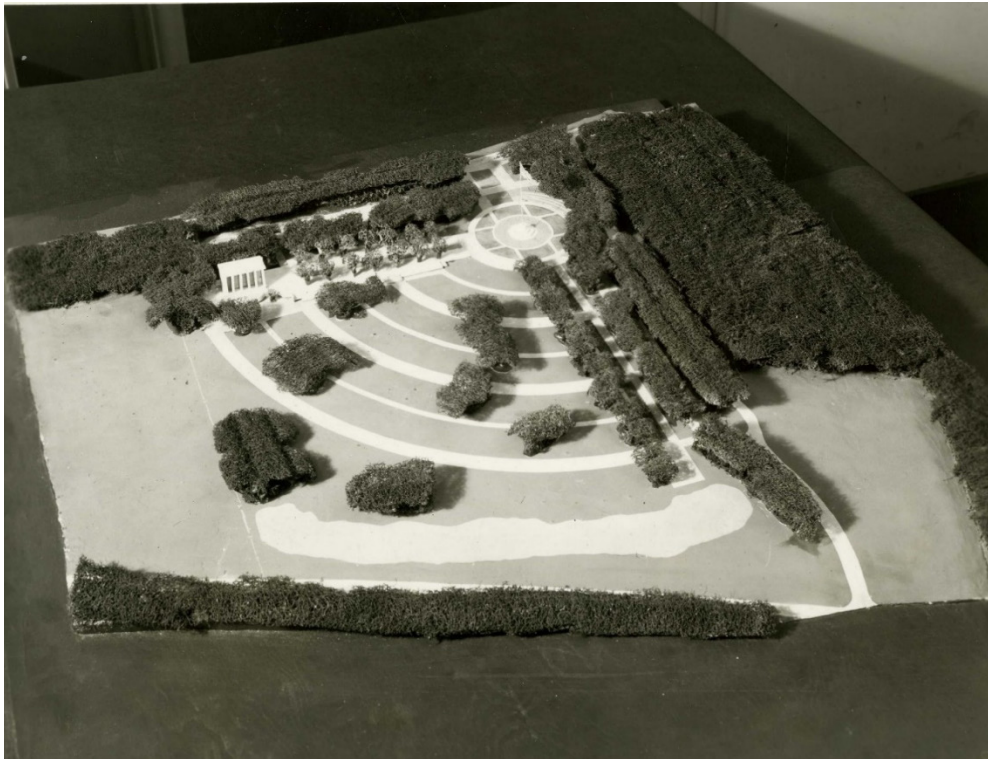


Figure 4. Photograph showing an early landscape model of the Cambridge American Cemetery, September 1947. (Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)

Several existing buildings including a mortuary, grave marker shop, and chapel (a repurposed Nissen or Quonset hut) were utilized during construction of the Cambridge American Cemetery. Obscured by vegetation associated with the Mill Plantation, the buildings were eventually removed and replaced with a parking area. The transformation of the site into a commemorative landscape would begin with the implementation of the landscape design and construction of the buildings and sculptures approved by the ABMC. The first phase of the project included grading and installation of a system of reinforced concrete beams on piles to maintain the levels and alignments of the headstones. The fabrication and installation of the headstones as well as construction of a water supply and distribution system, utilities, and roads and paths would follow...³¹ By the end of 1949, many of the interments had been completed, which ushered in the next phase of project implementation that included construction

²⁹ ‘British Honor GI Dead: Dedicate U.S. Army Cemetery in Ceremony at Cambridge’, *New York Times*, 29 February 1948.

³⁰ ‘Grave Visits Discouraged’, *New York Times*, 3 March 1948.

³¹ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, n.d., 21.

of a visitors' building, chapel, wall of the missing, reflecting pool, flagpole, landscaping, housing for the superintendent, and various utility buildings.

Despite having utilized the site as an American military cemetery since 1943, the US did not receive formal authorization from the British government for use of its land in perpetuity as a burial ground (without charge or taxation) until June 1954.³² At that time, the conditions of use of the property were identified, which noted that as a "contribution towards the happy relationship between this country and the United States of America" the University of Cambridge arranged for the land in question to be conveyed, in the form of a gift, to Her Majesty's Government.³³ The note identified six conditions as part of the agreement, which included the ABMC's responsibility for all expenses concerning the permanent layout and subsequent upkeep of the cemetery as well as maintenance of the public footpath along its western edge. Also, Her Majesty's Government would restrict use of the fields within the viewshed of the cemetery north of Cambridge Road for agricultural use only.

The Cambridge American Cemetery was formally dedicated on July 16, 1956. It was the first of six dedication ceremonies for ABMC WWII cemeteries in Europe. At the time, several dignitaries prepared speeches including Queen Elizabeth II who noted in a message that was read by Air Chief Marshall Sir Francis Fogarty, "from [air] bases in the neighborhood of Cambridge many Americans left never to return..." She also conveyed, "We are proud that there should be in our land this memorial to them".³⁴ The local newspaper also reported on the dedication, noting "Cambridge people should be proud of the magnificent monument erected to those who feel that they might enjoy a better life".³⁵

Cambridge American Cemetery Existing Conditions

The landscape design for the Cambridge American Cemetery prepared by the Olmsted Brothers embraced many of the original tenets of the Olmsted landscape aesthetic. This included creating an integrated composition that subordinated component elements such as structures within the landscape's comprehensive aesthetic to create artistic unity.³⁶ This was accomplished, in part, through thoughtful site planning and development of groupings of plantings to create a sense of dignified privacy amongst blocks of grave markers as well as modification of the natural topography in an effort to create a place that memorialized the dead in a respectful and contemplative setting with views toward the English countryside.

The overall spatial organization of the Cambridge American Cemetery is characterized by an axial composition with a strong geometric organization in the site plan. The great mall is anchored at one end by the chapel extending east toward the flagpole. The flagpole is located at the terminus of the great mall to the east and the west mall to the north (Figure 5). The flagpole serves as the focal point of the site and sits on a raised platform surrounded by low steps, followed by a strip of turf, a gravel path, and a series of clipped boxwood hedges and gardens. A secondary mall extends along the western extent of the site to provide access to the northwest corner of the cemetery. These developments illustrate that in spite of the rise of Modernism in the US during the post war years, many of the military

³² American Battle Monuments Commission, 'Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial', brochure, 2017.

³³ 'U.S. Accepts British Cemetery', *New York Times*, 22 June 1954 and Treaty Series No. 5 (1955).

³⁴ Herbert L. Matthews, 'Chapel in Britain Honors U.S. Dead', *New York Times* 17 July 1956.

³⁵ 'U.S. Cemetery Chapel Dedicated', *Cambridge Daily News*, 17 July 1956.

³⁶ Levee, 'Cemeteries, Burial Lots, Memorials and Monuments' 250, 252.

cemeteries built during this period show very little influence of this architectural trend, particularly in terms of site planning.³⁷

The Cambridge American Cemetery highlights a design that incorporates elements of topography and sensitive site design with the creation of two primary axes, monumental architecture, and an expanse of orderly graves. The detailed and intricate design of the cemetery varies from military cemeteries constructed after WWI, which were characterized by square or rectangular shapes. Some scholars believe that the intricate designs used in WWII military cemeteries were a deliberate attempt to draw attention away from “thoughts of death and sacrifice and evoke instead admiration for the great collaborative design that had produced these complex artifacts”.³⁸

Today, the nearly 31-acre cemetery includes eight primary nodes of development including: 1) site entrance off Madingley Road, the visitors’ building, facilities building, and visitor center in the southwest corner of the site; 2) a linear car park along the southern edge of the site and staff housing; 3) chapel; 4) great mall with three rectangular reflecting pools and wall of the missing; 5) 72-foot tall flagpole; 6) the west mall providing access to the entrance in the northwest corner of the site; 7) maintenance area/utility buildings/staff housing along western edge of property and 8) a turf lawn composed of seven curved grave plots (A-G) with graves aligned theater-style in concentric arcs.³⁹ The overall spatial organization of the site remains as it was originally designed; however, some modifications have occurred to accommodate visitor services. These changes were generally sensitive to the original design and do not detract from the historic character of the cemetery.



Figure 5. Photograph looking east toward the flagpole, great mall, wall of the missing, and chapel. (Gjesfjeld 2020)

³⁷ M.A. Stern, ‘The National Cemetery System: Politics, Place and Contemporary Cemetery Design’. In *Places of Commemoration: Search for Identity and Landscape Design*, J. Wolschke-Bulmahn, ed (19th Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture, 1995), 111.

³⁸ R. Robin, *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad, 1900-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 124.

³⁹ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, n.d., 12-13.

Chapel

The design of WWII cemeteries that were completed around 1956 were heavily influenced by an overtly neoclassical stylistic approach that tended to use the “ornamentally stripped classicism of neorationalist architecture”⁴⁰. Elements of these influences can be seen in the chapel at the Cambridge American Cemetery. The chapel was designed by Perry Shaw Hepburn and Dean. Local Cambridge architects, Hughes and Bicknell of Cambridge, executed the project as local representatives.⁴¹

The chapel is Grade II* listed and constructed of Portland stone (Figure 6). The rectangular gabled building measures eighty-five feet long, thirty feet wide and twenty-eight feet high and is characterized by simple lines with relatively little exterior ornamentation.⁴² Five projecting stone piers (each inscribed with a year between 1941-1945) extend the full height of the north elevation. In-between each column there are tall windows adorned with seals from every state of the union. The southern elevation includes a relief map of US wartime bases in the UK carved by David Kindersley of Cambridge. Moreover, two stone piers frame a teakwood door that is adorned with images of military equipment on the western extent of the building. Access to the building is offered via a set of steps made of York sandstone.⁴³ A commemorative inscription is situated above the door, which reads “To the Glory of God and in Memory of Those Who Died for Their Country 1941-1945.”

The interior of the building is composed of two spaces (Figure 7). A small devotional chapel is located at the eastern end of the building, while the bulk of the chapel is devoted to a large map measuring thirty feet long and eighteen feet high. The map is entitled “The Mastery of the Atlantic—The Great Air Assault” and was designed by American artist Herbert Gute and executed by Kindersley.⁴⁴ The map includes bronze and aluminum as well as polished Portland stone and various polished marbles such as Hauteville, Lunel Clair, and Lunel Fonce.⁴⁵ A striking mosaic was designed and installed on the ceiling of the chapel by Francis Scott Bradford, an American muralist. The glass mosaic depicts themes associated with resurrection and the last judgement as well as scenes of aircraft accompanied by angels representing the souls of lost airmen.⁴⁶ Pevsner summarized the building as “classically inspired but stripped quite bare” and a “conservative but on the whole successful design”⁴⁷.

⁴⁰ Stern, ‘The National Cemetery System’, 114.

⁴¹ Historic England, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1376611>.

⁴² American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, n.d., 11.

⁴³ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’, booklet, 1956, 6.

⁴⁴ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, 11, n.d., and N. Pevsner, and S. Bradley, *The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 613.

⁴⁵ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’, booklet, 1956, 8 and ‘U.S. Cemetery Chapel Dedicated’, *Cambridge Daily News*, 17 July 1956.

⁴⁶ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’ booklet, n.d., 17.

⁴⁷ Pevsner and Bradley, *The Buildings of England*, 613, 414.



Figure 6. View looking east of the front entrance of the chapel. (Gjesfjeld 2020)



Figure 7. Interior of the chapel showing intricate glass mosaics and large-format WWII wall map. (Gjesfjeld 2020)

Tablets of the Missing, Sculptures, and Reflecting Pool

The 472-foot-long wall of the missing is situated on the south side of the great mall (Figure 8). Composed of tablets of Portland stone, the wall is engraved with the names of 5,127 servicemen who

are missing in action, lost, or buried at sea.⁴⁸ The majority of the names (3,524) are those of airmen who were part of the US Army and Air Forces.⁴⁹ Names from every state of the union as well as the District of Columbia are represented on the wall. The tablets include the names of several notable individuals including Joseph P. Kennedy, brother of the late President John F. Kennedy; Glenn Miller (listed as Alton G.), well-known musician and composer; and Lt. Col. Leon R. Vance, Jr. who was the recipient of the Medal of Honor.⁵⁰

American sculptor Wheeler Williams designed the four figurative sculptures of servicemen that stand sentinel adjacent to the wall of the missing. The sculptures include an airman, soldier, sailor, and Coast Guardsman at equal intervals along the wall. Constructed of Portland stone, each statue measures approximately eight feet tall and weighs around eight tons.⁵¹ The paving surface of the walkway associated with the wall and sculptures is composed of York sandstone.⁵²

The reflecting pool is composed of three rectangular pools that extend east to west. A series of narrow sandstone ledges line the edges of the pools, followed by rectangular planting beds composed of low clipped boxwood hedges infilled with roses. Gravel paths run parallel to the hedges. The paths extend to the western end of the great mall where they meet two sets of stairs leading to the flagpole.



Figure 8. One of four sculptures of a soldier adjacent to the wall of the missing. (Gjesfjeld 2020)

Grave Markers

The Cambridge American Cemetery includes 3,812 burials arranged in concentric quadrants that are organized in seven grave plots. Each grave is marked by either a white marble Latin cross (3,732) or Star of David (80) and are not separated by rank.⁵³ Only American-designed military cemeteries on

⁴⁸ American Battle Monuments Commission, 'Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial' booklet, n.d., 17.

⁴⁹ American Battle Monuments Commission, 'Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial', booklet, 1956, 6.

⁵⁰ American Battle Monuments Commission, 'Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial' booklet, n.d., 15.

⁵¹ 'Service Men Pose for Memorial of World War II to Go Overseas', *New York Times*, 24 January 1951.

⁵² American Battle Monuments Commission, 'Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial', booklet, 1956, 6.

⁵³ American Battle Monuments Commission, 'Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial' booklet, n.d., 9.

foreign lands are marked by grave markers with religious symbology.⁵⁴ The front of the markers are inscribed with the name, rank, regiment, state, and date of death, while the backs of the markers are inscribed with the service numbers of the decedents. At the Cambridge American Cemetery, the grave markers were originally quarried and fabricated in Italian Tyrol, northwest of Venice (presumably Lasa).⁵⁵ Other sources indicate that some American military cemeteries used white Carrara marble for their grave markers.⁵⁶ Underlying the beauty of the cemetery, the grave markers themselves are a feat of engineering. Lemay notes, “The clean lines of the headstones are held neatly in their positions by a web of interlocking infrastructure buried deep underground. The headstones are set into a metal fixture that reaches six feet into the ground to connect like a puzzle piece to a long steel beam. The engineering holds each headstone ramrod straight, and creates meticulous, crisp lines in the layout”.⁵⁷ Today, the grave markers serve as character-defining features of the cemetery.

Visitors' Building

The visitors' building is located in the southwest corner of the site near the main entrance (Figure 9). It originally served as the superintendent's office where visitors could access restroom facilities as well as cemetery information. Pevsner noted that it is “an elementally plain Lodge of Portland stone”.⁵⁸ The building possesses stone piers on its eastern façade and is compatible with the clean lines associated with the design of the chapel. While this building was not included in the Historic England list description for the cemetery, it was part of the original design.



Figure 9. Photograph looking west showing the historic visitors' building (left) and contemporary facilities building (right). (Gjesfeld 2020)

⁵⁴ K.C. Lemay, *Triumph of the Dead: American World War II Cemeteries, Monuments, and Diplomacy in France* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2018), 2.

⁵⁵ American Battle Monuments Commission, 'Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial', booklet, 1956, 18.

⁵⁶ T.H. Conner, *War and Remembrance: The Story of the American Battle Monuments Commission* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 201.

⁵⁷ Lemay, *Triumph of the Dead*, 2.

⁵⁸ Pevsner and Bradley, *The Buildings of England*, 613.

Vegetation

The overall character of the vegetation associated with the site remains comparable to the original planting plans developed by the Olmsted Brothers in the early 1950s. Similar to the buildings and works of art at the site, the landscape was also inscribed with symbolism. Vegetation selected for planting in the Cambridge American Cemetery served as a departure from traditional landscaping evident at post WWI military cemeteries and was designed to represent rejuvenation and resurrection. This was achieved through planning multi-seasonal flowers, while moving away from heavy use of evergreens, which gave an “impression of austerity, an accent on the finality of death”..⁵⁹ To ensure that the landscape plantings were able to successfully illustrate the idea of resurrection, an irrigation system and storage reservoirs were incorporated into cemetery design..⁶⁰

Character-defining vegetative elements that remain extant include a vast expanse of highly manicured turf punctuated by a variety of mature shade trees including catalpa, beech, oak, sweet gum and tulip trees; an avenue of Japanese pagoda (*Sophora japonica*) trees along the west mall; double-pink hawthorn trees and rose bushes along the great mall; and boxwood hedges within the graves area. Some of the trees are no longer original specimens, but were replaced in-kind circa 2017, including the avenue of Japanese pagoda trees along the west mall as well as the double-pink hawthorn trees situated on the north side of the great mall.

Views and Vistas

Views from the cemetery played an important role in the selection of the location. Sited on the north slope of a hill, views out toward the surrounding English landscape, including Ely Cathedral, some 14 miles distant can be afforded from the cemetery (Figure 10). Lands on the northern and eastern boundaries were historically and continue to be maintained as agricultural lands per an agreement made between the UK and the US governments in 1954. The site is framed on the west by Madingley Wood and on the north by woodland associated with the former Mill Planation. Notable internal vistas within the confines of cemetery include those from the chapel west down the wall of the missing toward the flagpole as well as views down the west mall toward the entrance along Cambridge Road. Today, the views and vistas and associated setting reflect their historic character and remain a character-defining feature of the site.

⁵⁹ Robin, *Enclaves of America*, 126.

⁶⁰ American Battle Monuments Commission, ‘Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial’, booklet, 1956, 17-18.



Figure 10. Photograph looking north showing a framed view of the English landscape as seen from the northwest corner of the cemetery. (Gjesfeld 2020)

Conclusion

The Cambridge American Cemetery has a rich history of use and development that began in 1943 when it served as a temporary cemetery. By 1948, the site had been selected as a permanent place of rest for fallen WWII soldiers. Formal plans for improvement were made under the direction of the ABMC and completed in 1956. Today, the cemetery continues to function as was originally intended to commemorate and honor those who lost their lives in WWII. The highly manicured site, which is still managed by the ABMC, remains in excellent condition and demonstrates a high level of physical integrity or evidential value.

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