

EXTENSION OF THE CEMETERY IN HOSTIVAŘ, Prague 15

Description of the location

History of the cemetery in Hostivař

The original old Hostivař cemetery was located by the Church of the Beheading of St John the Baptist in Selská (Domkářská) street. It was abolished in accordance with a decree by the Emperor Joseph II (1784), prohibiting burials within city agglomerations. Only the wooden belfry has survived from this cemetery. In 1984, two sandstone tombstones, which are probably older than the church itself, were discovered during excavation work around the church.

The new cemetery is located further to the south, along K Jezeru street. It comprises two sections. The older was established in the first half of the 19th century, the mortuary was built in 1879 and some graves were brought here from the older cemetery near the Church of the Beheading of St John the Baptist. The existence of the cemetery and its original size are documented in a draft of the cadastral order of 1841. On the left wall behind the mortuary, an iron epitaph from 1847 has been reinserted into the stone, from the oldest preserved tombstone (Matěj Houdek, assistant teacher in Hostivař).

The second part of the cemetery is separated by a wall, with access through the middle. An iron cross with the inscription “1897, paid by Zádůš, settlers and the local dean” is located in the middle of the new section.

The area to the north of the cemetery is a fenced off, landscaped memorial park – an honourable burial ground, which houses a monument to the victims of the First World War, a memorial to the victims of the Second World War (by ing. arch. Zadák, with statues by V. Zrůbecký 1958) and 7 separate graves, including Colonel Bohuslav Mráz, a pilot with the 312 fighter squadron of the RAF.

According to the records, last updated in April 1999, 138 tombs, 511 graves and 238 urn graves are registered on an area of 0.44 hectares (more urn graves are currently located in the cemetery).

In 1912, an architectural competition was held to design a new central burial ground for Prague, and the location chosen was Hostivař. According to the winning design, the cemetery was planned to cover 50 hectares with a main funerary building, a crematorium, columbarium, arcaded tombs, a mausoleum for prominent individuals and a service area. However, due to historical events, this project was never realised.

Unfortunately, after 1989 the historical and aesthetic quality of the cemetery lost much of its appeal. The cemetery did not have the capacity to meet the demand for new burial sites (urn graves). There were a significant increase in the density of the original spatial layout and any free space was occupied by urn graves (cca 1x 1.2m). In certain cases, the unsuitable location of a grave prevented the smooth continuation of the original structure of the cemetery. At the same time, graves were – very unfortunately – also located in the cemetery's main and service roads, which led to a degradation of the original clearly defined urbanistic concept.

The meadow, or the land to the south of the cemetery, intended for its further expansion, is also part of an important prehistoric archaeological site. At the same time the “History of Hostivař” nature trail runs through this area. On this side, the cemetery turns on its “back” – cemetery waste landfill (which is currently being developed as a service yard).

Unfortunately, the exceptional character of this location has been disturbed by the Starý Hostivař bypass – K Horkám street (linking Hostivař to Chodov). Although the section in question has been graded and is shielded by mature vegetation, it cannot be visually ignored.

Prominent personalities buried in the Hostivař cemetery

F. X. Dvořák (1858 - 1939) – a Catholic poet, representative of Catholic modernism in the 1890s, and a Catholic priest. Since 1897 this grave has been adorned by an original statue of the Sacrifice of the Virgin Mary by František Bílek (1872-1947)

F. X. Šalda (1867 - 1937) – literary critic, writer and poet, whose grave is only marked under the Šalda family name (his parents lived in Hostivař in the house on lot no. 39).

Antonín Švehla (1873 – 1933) – an important politician during the First Republic, Minister of the Interior, Prime Minister and friend of T. G. Masaryk. The grave is on the left at the passage between the older and newer parts of the cemetery. The massive grave is dominated by a tall granite monolith. Some sources incorrectly list the author of the architectural work as the architect Josip Plečnik.

Current form and character of the site

- The original (historic) cemetery, originating from the time when the village of Hostivař was established, is currently located between a development of terraced houses to the north and the Hostivař bypass to the south. The expansion of the cemetery will take place to the south of the original cemetery, to lot no. 2229/5; it is assumed that it will be in direct contact with the wall of the original cemetery (lot no. 2233)
- a new service yard for the cemetery has been planned in the north-western corner of lot no. 2229/5 (a stand for a container with mixed biological waste). The plan is already being implemented and will have to be incorporated in the competition design in the form of the project submitted.
- The land designated for expansion is slightly sloping in a N-S direction, with a significant height difference between the level of the original cemetery and the surrounding land (the area of the cemetery was previously raised artificially through backfill).
- In terms of road connections, the site is linked to K Jezeru street on the western side (a 2-lane carriageway and pavement for pedestrians). There is currently no area allocated for the same stopping/parking of motor vehicles.
- The land further to the south, or SW (lot nos. 2229/2, 2766/1), which is currently meadow land overgrown with vegetation, or a belt of greenery dividing it from the bypass, is part of the conceptual part of the competition – with a realistic expectation (supported by the opinion of the district authorities) that it will be cultivated and, in particular, used for further expansion of the cemetery.
- The generously dimensioned pavement to the unused bus stop on the bypass and the “History of Hostivař” nature trail will have to be redesigned in accordance with the requirements of the competition; i.e. the current routing and direction can be revised.