

Exeter Dissenters' Graveyard

The Exeter Dissenters' Graveyard was created in 1748 and closed in 1854, it is only about one sixth of an acre in size, but during its 106 years of operation more than 1500 people were buried in the space. It is a reminder of the religious history of Exeter and the country in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Devon Gardens Trust was instrumental in the formation of the Exeter Dissenters' Graveyard Trust (EDGT) to protect the future of this historic graveyard and a grant enabled the newly formed Trust to leverage funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other donors amounting to almost £85,000K. A four year restoration project involved specialist contractors - stone masons, blacksmiths and builders with historic building experience - and almost eighty volunteers. What was once an eyesore is now an asset. The formation of EDGT demonstrated that several small groups (in this case the DGT, Exeter Civic Society, Exeter Historic Buildings Trust and St Leonard's Neighbourhood Association forming the initial Steering Group) can work together with a shared vision and clear, but flexible, plan. Relatively small donations could be used as matched funding to convince larger bodies (such as HLF) to invest significant amounts of money to achieve realistic goals.

