

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Aylesbury Cemetery

December 2014



Bucks Gardens
Trust



Association of
Gardens
Trusts



INTRODUCTION

Background to the Project

This site dossier has been prepared as part of The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust (BGT) Research and Recording Project, begun in 2014. This site is one of several hundred designed landscapes county-wide identified by Bucks County Council (BCC) in 1998 (including Milton Keynes District) as potentially retaining evidence of historic interest, as part of the Historic Parks and Gardens Register Review project carried out for English Heritage (BCC Report No. 508). The list is not conclusive and further parks and gardens may be identified as research continues or further information comes to light.

Content

BGT has taken the Register Review list as a sound basis from which to select sites for appraisal as part of its Research and Recording Project for designed landscapes in the historic county of Bucks (pre-1974 boundaries). For each site a dossier is prepared by volunteers trained on behalf of BGT by experts in appraising designed landscapes who have worked extensively for English Heritage on its Register Upgrade Project.

Each dossier includes the following for the site:

- A site boundary mapped on the current Ordnance Survey to indicate the extent of the main part of the surviving designed landscape, also a current aerial photograph.
- A statement of historic significance based on the four Interests outlined in the National Policy Planning Framework and including an overview.
- A written description, derived from documentary research and a site visit, based on the format of the English Heritage *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 2nd edn.
- A map showing principle views and features.

The area within the site boundary represents the significant coherent remains of the designed landscape. It does not necessarily include all surviving elements of the historical landscape design, which may be fragmented. It takes no account of current ownership.

NOTE: Sites are not open to the public unless advertised elsewhere.

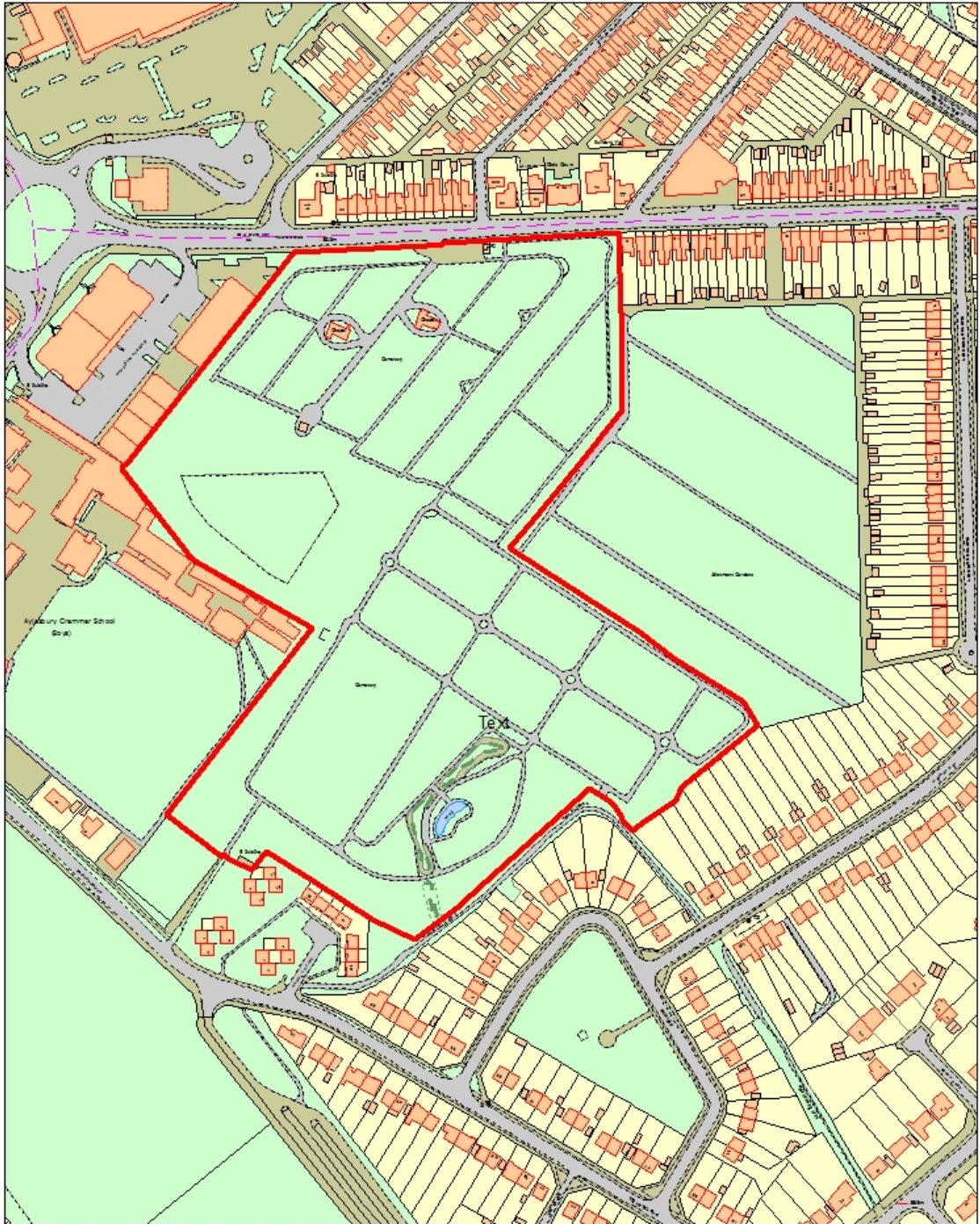
Supporters and Acknowledgements

The project was supported by The Association of Gardens Trusts and funded by BGT with a significant grant from The Heritage Lottery Fund. BCC generously provided current and historic mapping and access to the Historic Environment Record.

The Trust would like to thank the volunteers and owners who have participated in this project and given so much time and effort to complete this challenging and rewarding task.

Further information is available from: www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk

SITE BOUNDARY MAP



Aylesbury Cemetery, Tring Road: Boundary of Historic Designed Landscape Interest

Produced by the County Archaeological Service
December 2014



Scale: 1:2,634 at A4



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction is illegal. Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.
© Copyright Buckinghamshire County Council Licence No. 10001928 2014



Bucks Gardens Trust



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH



Aylesbury Cemetery, Tring Road: 2006 aerial photograph

© Getmapping plc. www.getmapping.com

Produced by the County Archaeological Service
December 2014



Scale: 1:2,634 at A4



Bucks Gardens Trust



COUNTY:	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	AYLESBURY CEMETERY BCC HER 0638800000
DISTRICT:	AYLESBURY VALE	
PARISH:	AYLESBURY	
OS REF.:	SP830 135	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview: A typical early Burial Board cemetery for a rural market/county town (1856-7), which is one of the most significant cemeteries in historic Bucks. It was designed by architects Poulton & Woodman of Reading, focussed on a largely intact group of buildings including two fine chapels that survive in good condition, with modest C19/C20 memorials. Along with Box, Wiltshire (1858), which only has a single chapel, this is apparently one of the best surviving examples of their cemetery work (c.f. Amersham and the more flamboyant Basingstoke, both 1859). The geometric layout, which survives largely intact, was developed successively during the later C19 and C20, echoing the original pattern, still retaining some notable trees from the largely evergreen C19 planting which made a significant contribution to the ornamental cemetery character, and some from successive phases.

Archaeological interest: A typical example of successive burials of a rural market/county town since the 1850s, including war dead. There is limited potential for Saxon burials. The potential for lost cemetery structures includes the 1850s gateway, lodge, several minor paths and walls.

Architectural interest: A largely intact group of typical mid-C19 burial board cemetery buildings and structures by regionally notable architects comprising two fine stone-built chapels and more modest brick mortuary as the focal features of the initial layout and subsequent extensions. The ensemble is incomplete since the ornamental lodge and gateway have gone, and the roadside wall been rebuilt in similar style. A largely intact collection of modest memorials survives, the most notable including Blomfield's generic Cross of Sacrifice (1920s), a scattered group of Commonwealth War Grave headstones and several chest tombs and groups of headstones for notable locals.

Artistic interest: The nucleus of the layout is a typical mid-nineteenth century geometric pattern, focussed on elaborate Gothic-style buildings and thickly ornamented with many evergreen trees, some of which remain, notably yews, holly and Wellingtonia. The later phases and their planting largely respected this pattern and include a cedar avenue. The chapels have finely sculpted ornamentation which survives in good condition. A 1960s informal memorial garden is contemporary with Amersham Crematorium.

Historic interest: There are strong associations between the cemetery and the history of the town, reflected in the changing cultural identity of the population and in the main faiths represented. There are also connections with influential members of the community, eg Tindall family. The cemetery provides an important link with the past and a place for contemplation by the local community.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

There is evidence of early occupation in the vicinity, Saxon burials having taken place on the site (BCC HER). By the early/mid-C19 the land was in agricultural use.

Aylesbury Parish Burial Board was set up in 1855. By this time, St Mary's churchyard was full and the Board's task was to create the town's first cemetery in New Road, later Tring Road (ref: R.King). In March 1858 the Bishop of Oxford consecrated the Church of England half of the cemetery.

The Burial Board commissioned Reading-based architects W.F. Poulton and W.H. Woodman, who had also worked on cemeteries at Amersham and Basingstoke. They were responsible for the ground plan as well as the design of the two chapels, the ornamental gates and decorative walls, a lodge for the superintendent, and the mortuary. The cemetery was divided into two halves, each one focused on its respective associated chapel, one for Anglicans and one for dissenters. Paths were laid out and ornamental trees planted, especially conifers.

The site had been extended to the southwest by 1880 (OS 1880). In January 1917 the administration was taken over by Aylesbury Town Council (Market, Allotments and Cemetery committee) and a further extension was planned (King) but delayed by the First World War. By the 1920s (OS) additional land was taken in to the east with an extension at a right angle to the southeast, these adding a further 2ha to the cemetery and doubling its area. Other improvements were carried out in 1921. Further land to the northeast was purchased in 1934 from printers, Hazell, Watson and Viney (King), but was not developed and remained in use as allotments until 2014 when it was brought into use for cremated remains.

In 1954 a further area adjacent to the southwest alongside Turnfurlong was acquired for a landscaped garden of rest, and lawn cemetery (King). 8 years later, this was used for improvements including a car park, re-modelled entrance and access from Turnfurlong. In 1964, this memorial garden was consecrated by the Bishop of Buckingham. In 1974, Aylesbury Vale District Council took over the management of the cemetery. The site is currently (2014) administered by Aylesbury Town Council.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The cemetery as laid out covered 2.2ha. and has been extended in phases so that it now (2014) covers 7ha. The cemetery is located in the Walton district of Aylesbury, adjacent and to the south of the A41 Tring Road (formerly Akeman Street) on the outskirts of the town (750m east from where the A41 joins the ring road and 2 km from St Marys Church to the east). It is situated to the northeast of Aylesbury Grammar School (founded late C16, moved to present site 1906, Hanley/Hunt) and southeast of the former Hazel, Watson and Viney printing works, now retail and factory units. Myrtle Villa to the north of the Tring Road

(1878 OS) is one of the earliest buildings in the vicinity of the cemetery, and of similar date it seems, but most of the other development is of a later date and predominantly late Victorian, Edwardian and post-Second World War housing.

The brick boundary walls on the Tring Road to the north of the site were partially re-built in the C21, but in similar form using the original stone cappings. The brick sections are intersected with railings, which would have allowed passers-by to see into the cemetery, but these views are obscured by hedges. The original south-west boundary wall formerly flanking the mortuary (shown on the Poulton & Woodman drawings) was demolished by 1880 (OS), when the cemetery was extended to the southwest. 200m east of the main entrance, the hedged and fenced boundary turns south, skirting a residential property and then the former allotment site (now to be used for cremations), and continues irregularly around the site as a panelled brick wall (C20).

The ground within the cemetery is generally level. The views are limited being largely contained within the boundaries and mainly focussed on the main 1850s axis and associated buildings, particularly the chapels.

When it was laid out, the cemetery was surrounded by agricultural land, but with the growth of Aylesbury in the C20 it is now within an urban setting with a mix of light industrial, residential, service, and school premises.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The principal entrance is from the north off the Tring Road through mid-C20 iron gates adjoining the site of the former lodge. The 1850s semi-circular gateway was demolished in the mid-C20 when the present boundary line parallel to the Tring Road was established. The former curved line of the gateway was reflected in the shape of the new car park. The C20 gateway, which is sited 10m north of the former C19 entrance, is off axis with the main drive. The drive extends southwest from the car park, after 50m reaching the west side of the Anglican chapel, where it continues around the building in an oval to allow for the turning of hearses. The drive continues for 50m south-west to reach the east end of the dissenters' chapel connecting with a similar turning oval, before ending 75m further on, at a roundel planted with a large *Wellingtonia*, in front (north) of the mortuary. The drive is concrete, but would formerly have been gravel; some evidence of this remains. A second pedestrian entrance created in the 1960s off Turnfurlong gives access from the southwest of the site and southern car park.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The main C19 buildings are by Poulter & Woodman: two chapels (both grade II listed) and a mortuary. The chapels by the same architects at Amersham and Basingstoke cemeteries, both also laid out by Poulter & Woodman, have been demolished; their chapel at Box, Wilts survives and is similar to those on this site. The two asymmetrically sited chapels dominate

the original mid-C19 core of the site, the main drive serving to separate the two sections of the cemetery, Anglican and dissenters'.

The chapels are of similar design and construction with minor differences. The Anglican chapel is consecrated and still in its intended use; it has a chancel arch and small crosses on the roof. The dissenters' chapel has no cross; it is now (2014) used as a store. Both chapels have small spirelets and are built of rubble stone, with Bath stone dressings and fish scale slate roof tiles topped with decorative ridge tiles. Stone finials and other decoration are in evidence. The iron gates of the dissenters' chapel porch survive in good condition with the ornamentation intact. The mortuary, by contrast, is brick-built using black and pale yellow bricks to create a diaper pattern, except the southwest wall which was intended to be hidden and is therefore plain. There are decorated ventilation panels and triangular louvres in the pyramidal slated roof. Two short sections of wall surviving from the 1850s boundary flank the mortuary, abutting its south-west and south-east walls.

OTHER LAND

The cemetery is laid out in a grid plan with the 1850s chapels being the focus of the site. These were intended for religious ceremonies before the interment, but only the Anglican one is used for this purpose today. The cemetery was constructed so it would be regarded with civic pride and therefore care was taken over the design and renowned architects were employed and much of the core design by Poulton and Woodman remains intact today. The paths that form the grid layout are integral to the design as was the planting of trees and hedging. This pattern and character was followed when the extensions were added in the late C19 and early C20 on the Tring Road side of the cemetery. The oldest areas of the cemetery contain typical C19 evergreen cemetery planting, including Wellingtonia, stone pine, Irish yews and cedars and two fine beech trees. The trees flank the main drives and the lines of the paths which cross them. Some of the paths enclose small roundels which were also planted with specimen trees. The later C20 area to the south of the core has a more piecemeal layout with monuments in a wider range of styles. It contains the memorial garden constructed in 1964 by J. S. Bishop & Co. (King). This garden is used for cremated remains and is informally landscaped and includes an ornamental pond, deciduous trees and flowers.

Cemetery ledgers (CBS) illustrate the phases of burial in the major areas. There is a collection of modest memorials, the most notable are found in the area along the north half of the west boundary west of the dissenters' chapel. In this area there are approximately thirty C19 gothic-shaped headstones and the fine, but weather damaged, chest tomb of Joseph Kingham. The Tindall family (Acton Tindall, founder of the workhouse on Bicester Road, Aylesbury) plot containing seven graves surrounded by iron railings, is located 50m to the southeast of the Anglican chapel to the east side of the path. A number of Commonwealth war graves occur throughout the cemetery, from First and Second World Wars; during the First World War there was a military hospital at nearby Queen's Park School which may account for some of the graves. A World War One Cross of Sacrifice and memorial plinth of Portland stone, designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield (unveiled 1924) is centrally located 150m south of the main entrance on the corner of the C20 section. The rest

of the cemetery contains C20 memorials of numerous designs, including Italian, Polish and Islamic (facing Mecca) memorials. There are a number of C20/21 ornate family mausolea within the west corner of the site.

REFERENCES

- Pevsner, N & Williamson, E. *The Buildings of England, Buckinghamshire*. (1994), p. 152.
Gibbs, R. *A History of Aylesbury*. (1885).
King, Roger. *History of Aylesbury Cemetery* (un-dated).
Hanley, H & Hunt, J. *Aylesbury – A pictorial history*.
Rutherford, Sarah. *The Victorian Cemetery*. (2008)

Aylesbury Cemetery Web site: <http://www.aylesburytowncouncil.gov.uk/cemetery/>

Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record (BCC HER).

MAPS

1813, Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing, 2" scale (BL).
Poulton & Woodman, Cemetery plans 1856-7 CBS:
Layout plan. ref CBS MB3/40/1. Entrance and lodge. CBS ref. MB3/40/2.
Episcopal chapel. CBS ref. MB3/40/3. Dissenters chapel. CBS ref. MB3/40/4.

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition, 1884.
2nd edition, 1990.
Revised 1920, 1940, 1950, 1960

OS 25" to 1mile: 1st edition, 1878-80

OS 10,000 : NG edition, 1982.
Revised 1980-1990

C de C September 2014; edited HJ, November 2014.

KEY HISTORIC VIEWS & FEATURES

