

# Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



## Ousebank Cemetery, Newport Pagnell

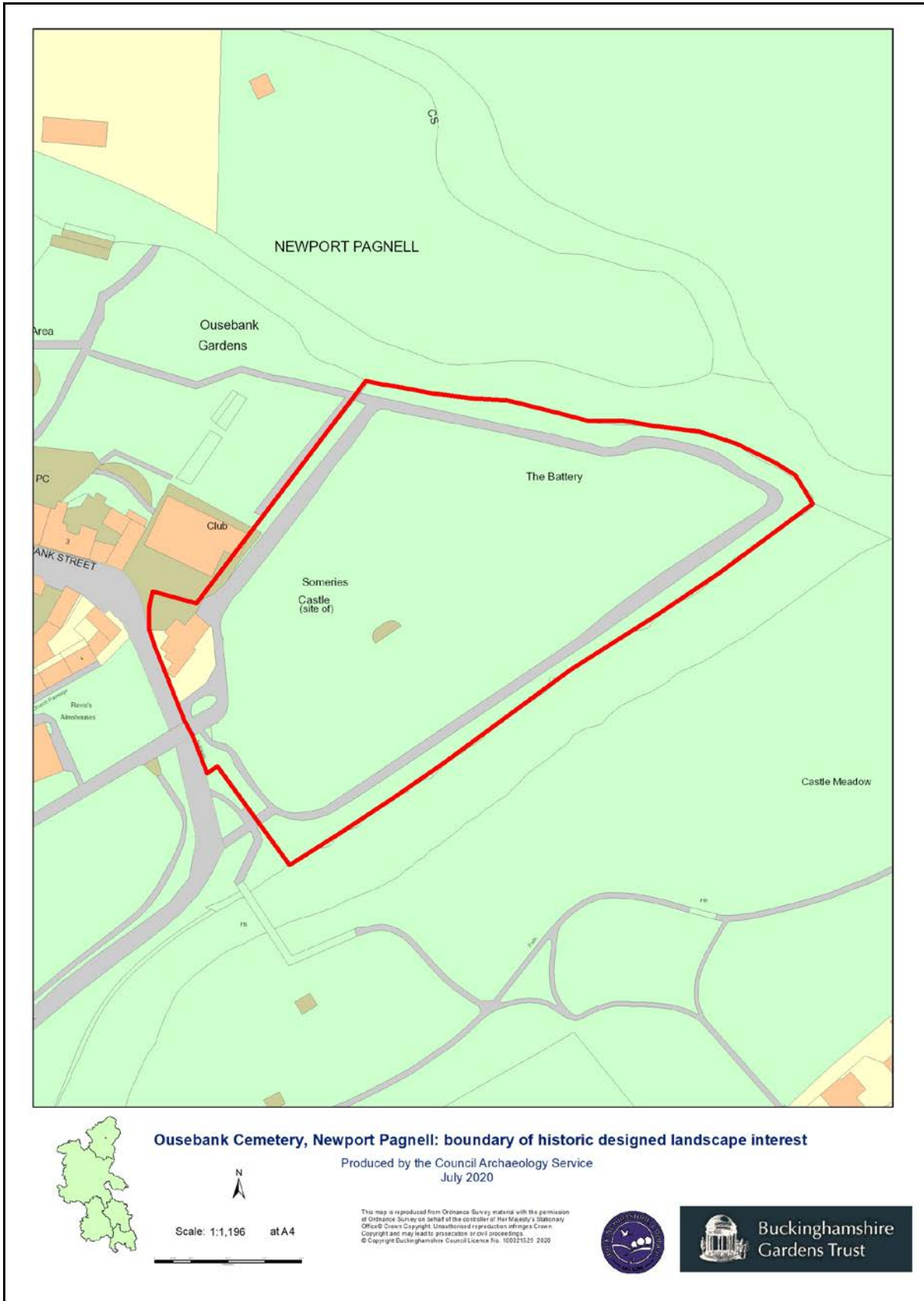
July 2020, revised September 2020



Roland  
Callingham  
Foundation



# HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY





**Ousebank Cemetery, Newport Pagnell: 2017 aerial photograph**

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Produced by the Council Archaeology Service  
July 2020



Scale: 1:1,196 at A4



## 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 (now Historic England) (BCC Report No. 508). The list is not definitive 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 by BGT in appraising designed landscapes.

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 Planning Policy Framework and including an overview.
- A description, derived from documentary research and site visits, based on the format of Historic England's *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest 2<sup>nd</sup> edn.*
- A map showing principal 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 funded by BGT, with significant grants from the Finnis Scott Foundation, the Roland Callingham Foundation, BCC (since April 2020 part of Buckinghamshire Council) and various private donors. Buckinghamshire Council also provided significant funding, and help in kind including current and historic mapping and access to the Historic Environment Record. The project is supported by The Gardens Trust.

The Trust thanks 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](http://www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk)

<b>COUNTY:</b>	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	<b>OUSEBANK CEMETERY NEWPORT PAGNELL</b>
<b>DISTRICT:</b>	MILTON KEYNES	
<b>PARISH:</b>	NEWPORT PAGNELL	
<b>OS REF.:</b>	SP 878 440	

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Overview

A Burial Board cemetery for a rural market town (1861), which survives intact. It is one of the more significant cemeteries in historic Bucks, particularly given the quality of land form, planting and historic monuments and structures forming part of the ensemble comprising a Picturesque layout. The 1.25ha. cemetery was designed by Richard Sheppard, a local architect based in the town, and Northern District County Surveyor. The layout, based on a central axial path and a circuit path survives intact, and is ornamented with many mature trees, particularly conifers, many probably from the 1860s planting. It is unusual for its scale and date as it does not reflect a strict functional grid pattern of paths and drives as is the case with other of the more significant cemeteries in Bucks of this period such as at Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe.

### Archaeological interest

A typical example of successive burials of a rural market/county town since the 1860s. Further archaeological potential largely arises from evidence relating to lost cemetery features such as paths and structures and former uses relating to its riverside position. It is believed to be the site of Civil War burials. Although its origin is unclear the low mound in the north-east corner has high potential for evidence including both up to 1860, perhaps as the remains of a motte or a Civil War battery, and for burials from the 1860s onwards.

### Architectural interest

An ensemble of mid-C19 burial board cemetery building and structures comprising an unusual combination of lodge and chapel as the principal building at the edge of the cemetery, with the vehicle gateway and boundary wall/railings. The main entrance is from the churchyard via an unusual road bridge over the sunken Ousebank Street and an earthen bridge with a tunnel over the cemetery circuit path. The ensemble survives intact. It is united by the use of local Chicheley red brick and sandstone dressings, and Gothic/Tudor style. The architect Sheppard was local and a county surveyor who worked elsewhere in Bucks. A largely intact collection of memorials includes the important and unique Taylor family Bath stone-faced exedra, with Art Nouveau foliate carving and bronze plaques, and a notable group of freestanding monuments including spires, pyramids and obelisks.

### Artistic interest

The 1860/61 design, apparently by Sheppard, is based on a Picturesque circuit path with the Tudor-style building as an incident on the route. It is ornamented with deciduous trees and evergreens, many of which are apparently original. The axial path from the churchyard gateway and road bridge leads to the centre of the cemetery and to the main feature which is a low mound, surrounded by a ring of mature yew, with a number of significant monuments. As part of the circuit path a riverside section to the north and east makes full use of the views and river as a feature, enclosing the mound on two sides. The original historic town and bucolic riverside setting survives.

**Historic interest:** There are strong associations between the cemetery and the history of the town including the Taylor family who were eminent here as chemists, mustard and mineral water manufacturers. Other monuments record many local tradesmen and notables including the Bull family whose monument is at the centre of the mound. The cemetery provides an important link with the past and a place for contemplation by the local community.

## **HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

The origins of the riverside site may include a medieval defensive role and Civil War activity, focussed on the low mound surrounded on two sides by the River Ouse. In the Civil War it is believed to have been a battery facing out over the river with a 270 degree sweep to the countryside beyond but perhaps may have had earlier origins. It is thought that Civil War burials have been identified. Newport was first a Royalist stronghold. The King's men were routed and the Parliamentary forces took charge, fortifying the town with earthworks, some of which survive on the town Common, Bury Field. John Bunyan was said to have served in the Commonwealth forces here.

By the early C19 the site was in agricultural use, lying in a rural area called Someries east of the parish church and churchyard, enclosed by the River Ouse on the east and south sides.

With the advent of the Burial Acts in the mid-1850s as part of a country-wide response to the general lack of decent burial space, the Newport Pagnell Burial Board was set up. In c.1860 the Board commissioned local architect Richard Sheppard to design a cemetery to succeed the parish churchyard. Sheppard (fl.1861-83), whose office was The Elms, Newport Pagnell in 1868, was the Northern District County Surveyor in c.1839-70 and District Surveyor of County Bridges (RIBA). Many of his bridge reports survive (e.g. CBS Q/AB/25/14). It seems that Sheppard was responsible for the layout as well as the design of the unusually combined lodge and mortuary chapel, the ornamental gates and brick walls, road bridge, tunnel and other structures. The process was reported in various articles in a contract book with articles of agreement between William Tibbetts of Buckingham, builders, and Newport Pagnell Burial Board (CBS DC 13/39/15). A minute book survives which was begun in 1860 (CBS DC 13/39/13).

The cemetery was designed in Picturesque style and laid out with a circuit path which on two of the four sides overlooked the river and countryside beyond for a considerable distance. The main entrance gave direct access from the parish churchyard via an iron road bridge over the sunken Ousebank Street to a brick lined bridge crossing a section of the circuit path, and then to the axial main path on an embankment sloping down to the north-east. The lodge/chapel was at the west corner next to the vehicle entrance off Ousebank Street. Paths were laid out and ornamental trees planted, mostly conifers (OS, 1879). The existing low mound, which has been interpreted as the site of a motte and/or a Civil War gun emplacement, was a key feature and marked with a ring of yew on the banks around the plateau. It became a focus for prestigious burials and monuments in the cemetery.

In 1861 the cemetery was nearly completed. Part was allotted to Dissenters. The 'neat brick-built mortuary chapel' presumably served the Dissenters, as the Anglican parish church was adjacent and directly linked via the churchyard path and would have been used for those parishioners (*Post Office Directory of Buckinghamshire*, 457).

By 1879 (OS) the 3 acre (1.25ha.) cemetery had a Sunday School building at the south corner. The Picturesque layout was based around a tree-lined circuit path via the lodge and gateway off Ousebank Road. The cemetery was planted principally with conifers. The riverside walk was lined on the inner side with alternating conifers and deciduous trees. The mound was noted as a Battery, and Site of Someries Castle, and surrounded by a ring of conifers. While the cemetery lay close to the centre of the town, it had a rural character and outlook, with the Ouse on two sides, the grounds of Ouse Bank, a substantial town house, to the west, Castle Meadow beyond the river to the south-east, and the parish church and churchyard above to the south-west.

Little changed after this except that many monuments were erected. The fine Art Nouveau-style Taylor monument was erected in c.1900 for members of the Taylor family. It was probably built by Wilford Bros, Builders and Funeral directors, of Union Street, Newport Pagnell. The Taylor family was eminent in the town, as chemists, and mustard and mineral water manufacturers.

The cemetery is closed to new burials and is managed by Milton Keynes Council.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

### **LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING**

Newport Pagnell lies in the north of Buckinghamshire between Milton Keynes to the south and Olney to the north. The cemetery lies to the east of the town centre beyond the adjacent parish church and churchyard.

The 1.25 ha. cemetery is enclosed to the north-west and south-west by red brick boundary walls against Ousebank Street and the churchyard and the former garden of Ouse Bank, now a public garden. It is enclosed by the River Ouse to the north and east, with meadows beyond. The setting is the historic town centre to the west, Ousebank Gardens to the north-west, the adjacent church and churchyard, and on the other sides beyond the river rural meadows, much as was originally the case in 1861.

The ground slopes down from highest point at the west corner on which the lodge/chapel stands towards the mound in the north-east corner and the riverside boundaries. Views out are filtered by the mature trees. Views include to the north and east of the river and the largely unchanged wider rural setting, particularly from the circuit walk; to the south-west of the parish church on higher ground; and to the west the C19 trees of Ousebank Gardens above the brick boundary wall.

### **ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

The main entrance is towards the centre of the south-west boundary, leading from the adjacent parish church and main path through the churchyard. The path crosses the sunken Ousebank Street via an iron bridge with ornamental railings and brick piers with stone caps. It leads to an earthen bridge over the cemetery circuit path, the tunnels lined with brick, and thence to the axial path carried for 100m through the centre of the cemetery, initially on a causeway down the sloping land. The outer north and east sections of the circuit walk overlook the river with long views over the meadows beyond. A cross path links the north-west section of the perimeter walk with the south-east riverside section, passing the north end of the main central path and the south side of the mound. The circuit path gives access from the lodge/chapel at the west corner of the cemetery.

The vehicle gateway off Ousebank Street lies 35m north of the churchyard entrance and adjacent to the north of the lodge/chapel building. A pair of 3m high red brick stone piers with stone caps flanks the vehicle gateway and supports iron gates with ornate fleur-de-lys finials (Sheppard, 1861). The gateway is set in the red brick boundary wall with piers and stone caps and gives access to the circuit path. A further pedestrian entrance is set into the roadside wall 35m south of the churchyard entrance, enclosed by a round-headed arch, marking the site of the former school building. An entrance to Ousebank Gardens through the west wall has been made 70m north of the lodge/chapel. These two gateways were added later to the original layout.

This layout reflects Sheppard's 1861 design with little alteration.

### **PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS**

The main building is a combined lodge and mortuary chapel (listed Grade II, Sheppard, 1861) which stands 25m north of the main gateway. It is sited on the highest ground at a similar level to the churchyard and forms part of the churchyard scene in the view from the latter over the sunken boundaries with Ousebank Street. The Gothic outline is a Picturesque feature from the churchyard in the view with the Almshouses, and before the trees matured it would have been prominent within the cemetery spread out below it.

It is built in Tudor Gothic style of local red brick from Coales brickworks in Chicheley with sandstone dressings, and steeply pitched slate roofs with courses of plain and hexagonal slates. It is T-shaped on plan, with the chapel forming

the main arm of the T and the two-storey lodge the cross bar. The principal feature is the spire over the porch which fits into the intersection of the two arms of the T. The south front overlooking the gateway has a triple arched window, arched doorcase and two storey projecting gable with arched windows. The north front has a projecting two storey gable two storey porch and spire with lucarnes and a gilded weathervane with date. The west gable has an oculus with a cinquefoil and the east gable a large arched window. The interior of the chapel is believed to have arched braces on stone corbels with collars and principal rafters and a ceramic tiled floor with a decorative margin and quatrefoil centre feature. The chapel was presumably for Dissenters or non-conformists and remained unconsecrated, as Anglicans had the convenient use of the nearby parish church.

The dual-purpose building was the main structure in Sheppard's 1861 design. It is unusual as the two functions, lodge and chapel, are combined in a single structure standing close to the boundary and gateway, where normally chapels of this period were freestanding and formed the focus within the body of the layout. Little is known about Sheppard, but he was clearly regarded as a competent architect as he held county surveyor positions, and was apparently working in c.1870 (CBS; RIBA Directory).

### **OTHER LAND**

The cemetery is laid out in Picturesque style with the 1861 chapel and lodge building offset above it and remains as Sheppard designed it in 1861. The cemetery was constructed so it would be regarded with civic pride and therefore care was taken over the design; Sheppard's layout remains intact and the cemetery was never extended. It forms part of a group of open spaces with Ousebank Gardens to the north-west, accessed from Tickford Street, and the parish churchyard to the south-west with views over the river to rural meadows.

The axial central path and circuit walk and spurs are integral to the design as was the planting of trees, as shown on the 1879 OS 25", with largely conifers in a distinctive pattern. Many specimens of the C19 planting survive including a fine oak, copper beeches, and a variety of evergreens including common yew and upright Irish yew, cedar, Wellingtonia, Scots pine and other conifers. The riverside is planted with later mature willow replacing the original line of alternative conifers and deciduous trees. The circuit path framed by trees is an important Picturesque feature, not only to access the graves, but to take full advantage of views into the cemetery and out, of the river and fields beyond, and of the church and churchyard above.

A ring of mature yew encircles the plateau of the mound in the north-east corner, with many graves and monuments on the banks and plateau. The mound had views over the river when the cemetery was laid out but these are largely obscured by mature planting including the ring of yew.

The collection of memorials in the cemetery is notable and extensive. It survives well and is a good example of local taste. It includes three Commonwealth War Graves from World War II. The mound is a focus for a group of larger memorials. It is surmounted by a flat stone memorial to 'Bull', surrounded by an ornamental iron railing. This covers a vault for the notable local family which included the town's principal solicitors W.B. and W.R. Bull and one of whose members was friends with the C18 poet Cowper of Olney. The mound has a group of obelisks and other notable stone memorials, some including iron railed graves.

The most important memorial is to the Taylor family (listed Grade II, c.1900), standing c.60m east of the churchyard gateway. It is set into the embanked slope of the causeway carrying the axial path and is only visible from lower ground to the east. When built the integral curved stone seat enjoyed a view over the river to Castle Meadow.



The family were eminent in the town as chemists, mustard and mineral water manufacturers. The monument was probably built by Wilford Bros, Builders and Funeral directors, of Union Street, Newport Pagnell. It is built of brick, faced with Bath oolitic limestone in ashlar work, and carries 5 copper/bronze plaques and two wooden tablets. This fine exedra backs into the terraced slope carrying the central path. It has wide curved arms with terminal dentilled and corniced pilasters, rounding to a central arched aedicule between similar pilasters; a round-headed arch is set in a channel-rusticated surround with an open modillion pediment, and a cushioned shield above the arch bearing the legend MORS JANVA VITAE (translates as Death is the Door of Life). The curved wings have a continuous cornice and an east-facing seat overlooking Castle Meadow, between which the plain ashlar walling has raised carved attenuated trees with roots and foliage in an Art-Nouveau style as fictive supports to the cornice. Between each tree plaques record members of two generations of the family, the earliest, of cast bronze, to Thomas Taylor (1832-1900), by Blunt and Wray of Clerkenwell, the others of sheet bronze making a total of seven. The floor is paved within the tangent of the outer piers. Lead screw mountings on the cornice suggest a missing metal cresting.

## REFERENCES

Historic England Listed Building Descriptions.  
Milton Keynes Council, Cemetery Land Use Strategy Report (2011).  
RIBA, *Directory of British Architects 1834-1900* (1993), 829.  
Rutherford, Sarah, *The Victorian Cemetery* (2008).

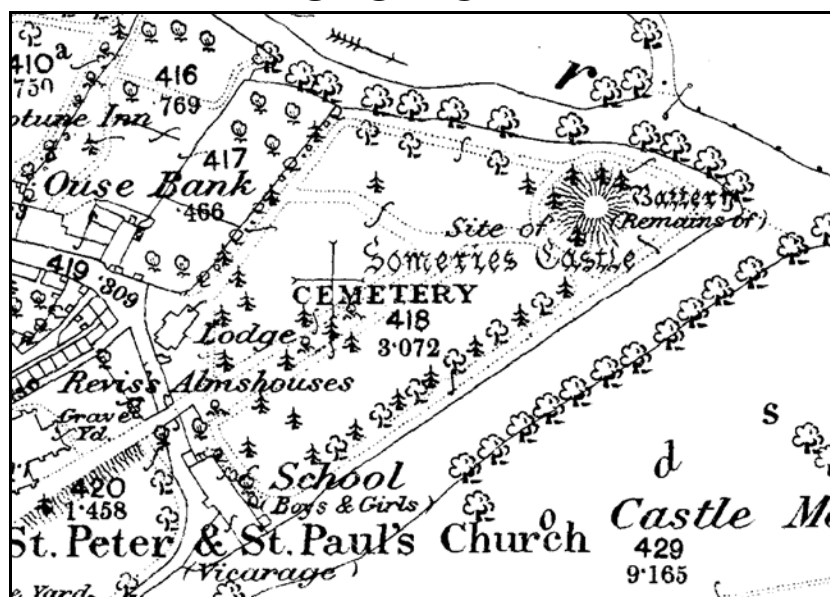
## MAPS

OS 6" and 25" to 1 mile:       1<sup>st</sup> edition, surveyed 1880.  
  2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1899.  
  Revised 1924

## Archival Items

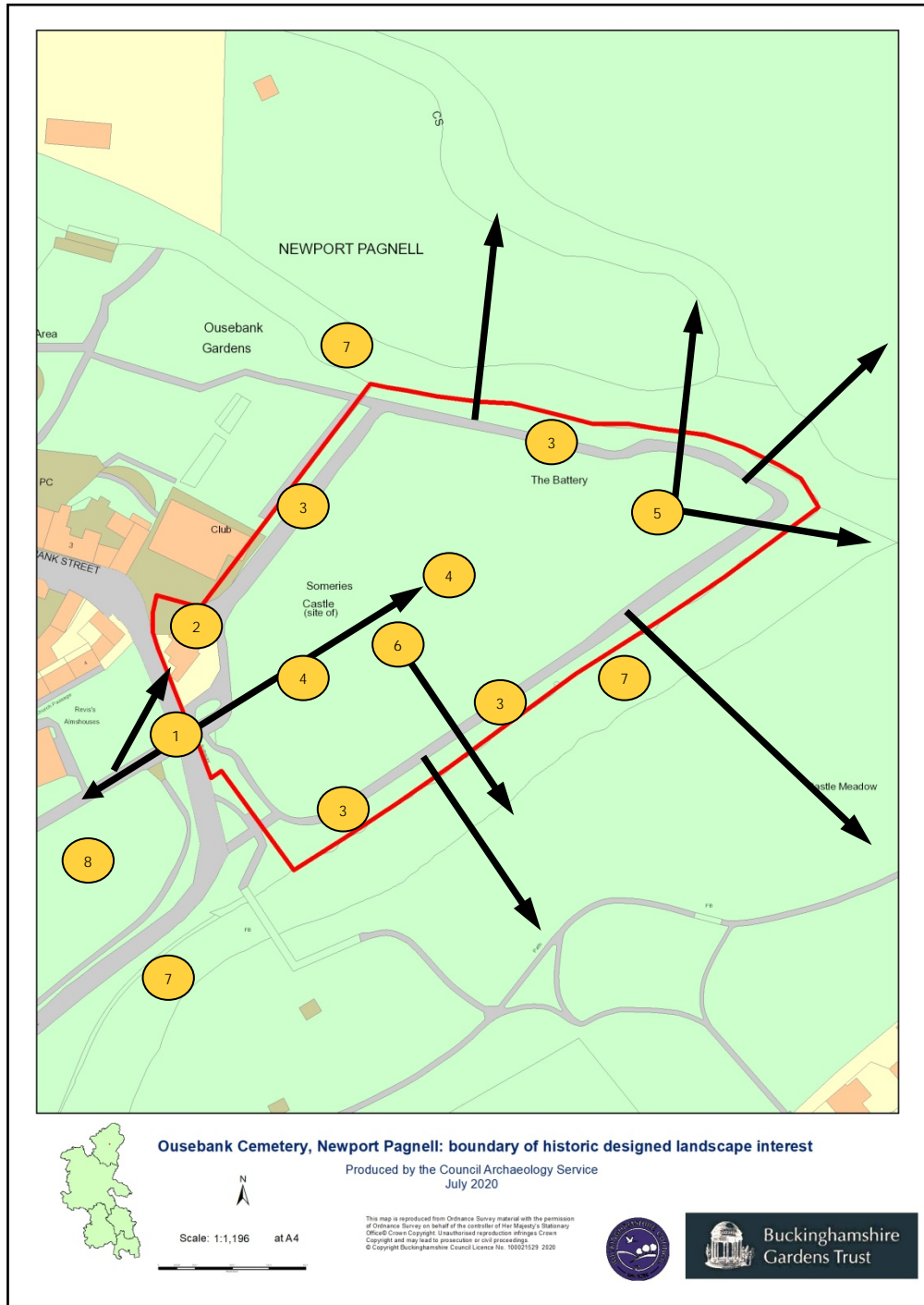
1860 Contract book [articles of agreement between William Tibbetts of Buckingham, builders, & NP Burial Board] (CBS DC 13/39/15)  
1860-1926 Newport Pagnell Burial Board Minute book (CBS [DC 13/39/13](#))  
SR, June 2020, revised September 2020.

## HISTORIC MAP



1878 Ordnance Survey 25" scale showing original planting of cemetery with largely conifers and a few deciduous trees. ©Landmark Information Group

## KEY HISTORIC VIEWS & FEATURES



### Key to numbered features

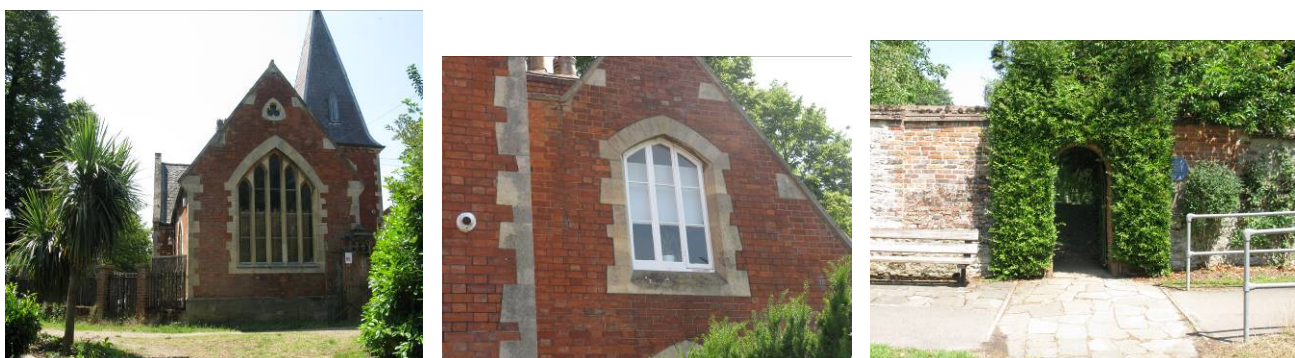
1.	Main Entrance from the churchyard via iron bridge across Ousebank Road and across the circuit path in tunnel.	2.	Lodge/Chapel and vehicle gateway
3.	Circuit path	4.	Central path on embankment
5.	Mound including yew circle and monuments	6.	Taylor Monument
7.	River Ouse	8.	Churchyard

## CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHS

Ken Edwards



Gateway and boundary wall



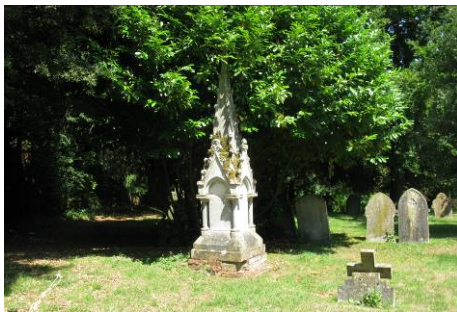
Lodge and chapel; pedestrian gateway.



Lodge and chapel



Taylor Monument



Taylor Monument and other monuments.



Monuments and mature trees



The Mound with monuments and ring of yew on the bank.



Monuments on and around the Mound; mature evergreens including yew and pines.



View of the parish church tower.



Aerial photograph, 2006, showing the south-west boundary wall, gateway and chapel/lodge, and relationship to the town, parish church and churchyard. © Michael Farley.