

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Stony Stratford Cemetery, Calverton Road

October 2020

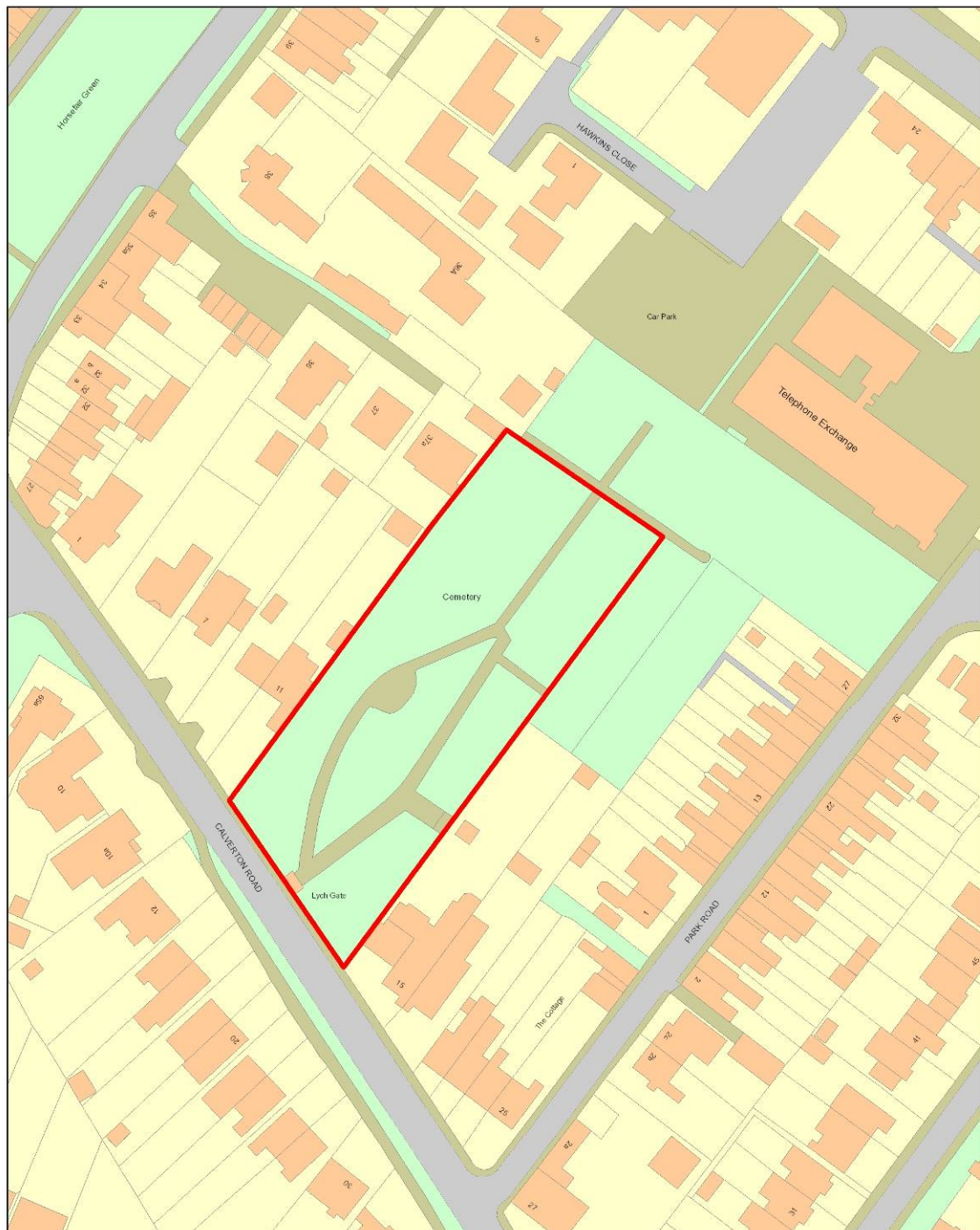


The Finnis Scott
Foundation

Roland
Callingham
Foundation



HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



Stony Stratford Cemetery: boundary of historic designed landscape interest

Produced by the Council Archaeology Service
July 2020



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Stony Stratford Cemetery: 2017 aerial photograph

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Buckinghamshire
Gardens Trust

Scale: 1:990 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* 2nd 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

COUNTY:	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	STONY STRATFORD CEMETERY, CALVERTON ROAD
DISTRICT:	MILTON KEYNES	
PARISH:	STONY STRATFORD	
OS REF.:	SP 788 401	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

A simple Burial Board cemetery (1856-7) for a north Bucks market town. The 1-acre (0.4ha) site was designed with a typical ensemble of structures by Northampton architect Edmund Law including two separate chapels and a stone boundary wall with a lych gate. Although the chapels have gone the lych gate, boundary walls, ornamental railings and main paths to the chapel sites survive as designed by Law, and the planting evokes the C19 character. The survival of key documents relating to its creation and original form add to the significance: the 1857 site plan, the 1856 contract documents including contract drawings and plan, Burial Board minutes and churchwardens' Account Book.

Archaeological interest

A typical example of successive burials of a rural market town since the 1850s, including war dead. Further archaeological potential largely arises from evidence relating to former agricultural uses and close association with the nearby town, but this is unlikely given the high subsequent level of disturbance.

Architectural interest

Only part of the ensemble by Edmund Law survives, in the form of the 1856 stone roadside boundary wall and railings with ornamental capping and the lych gate, together with the boundary walls to north and south. A collection of modest memorials survives. The two former Gothic-style stone mortuary chapels which formed the focus of the design have been demolished although their sites remain open. The 1856 contract and contract drawings are a rare survival for such an ensemble in Bucks.

Artistic interest

The design is a typical simple mid-C19 layout, based on paths leading from the gateway to the sites of the former chapels, and originally ornamented with conifers, probably largely Irish yew. The layout survives largely intact, but the markers between the consecrated and unconsecrated ground have gone. The original partly rural setting does not survive as it is now a residential area of the town.

Historic interest

There are strong associations between the cemetery and the history of the town and its community. The cemetery provides an important link with the history of town residents and a place for contemplation by the local community. The survival of key documents relating to the creation and original form add to the significance of the site: the 1857 site plan, the 1856 contract documents including contract drawings and plan, Burial Board minutes and churchwardens' Account Book.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

By the early C19 the site was in agricultural use, lying in a rural area detached to the south of the town near the River Great Ouse next to the road to Calverton.

With the advent of the Burial Acts in the mid-1850s in response to the general lack of decent burial space, the Burial Board of the United Parishes of St Giles and St Mary Magdalene, Stony Stratford was formed and directed a cemetery to be laid out. Detailed records of this process survive, including the Burial Board Minutes, Contract and Contract Drawings, site plans and the Churchwardens' Account Book, all in Buckinghamshire Archives.

The cemetery was constructed on an agricultural close with fruit trees which was formerly the property of the Bell-rope Charity (Sheahan & Burial Board Minutes, 1856). It was designed by the Northampton architect Edmund F. Law (1810 or 1811-1882) who was in practice from c.1837 (RIBA) and was sometime County and Town Surveyor. Law furnished plans in February 1856 and estimated the cost of the two chapels at £600, fittings £50, boundary walls £150, fence and lych gate cover £70, but this did not include laying out the ground. The cost of the land was £175 and the total estimated cost was £1250.

The structures were built by Thomas and William Fisher of Northampton, builders and carpenters. The 1856 contract (Buckinghamshire Archives DC 12/39/2) includes a set of contract drawings on tracing paper, which is an unusual survival. The drawings include elevations for both chapels, in Gothic style. The Anglican chapel was more elaborate than the Early English-style Dissenters' chapel and included a small tower with a bell cote. Drawings include the roadside fence on a dwarf wall and the lych gate, and a ground plan showing drains and the proposed dividing line between consecrated and unconsecrated ground. There was to be a privy in the north corner which remained unrealised.

Fishers' tender of May 1856 was for £876 and work was under way by July. A second payment was made to Fishers in October but their slow progress was criticised by the Board. Fishers had completed buildings by January 1857. In December 1856 Mr Jeffs of Calverton was directed to level and prepare gravel walks for a sum of 15 gns. A siliceous stone was inspected for the boundary markers between the consecrated and unconsecrated ground. The Bishop specified that the boundary stones should be at least 9 inches in diameter, at least 3 feet above ground level and no nearer than 10 feet apart where the line was straight. This was amended slightly and a light iron railing connected the stones. Red pottery indicators were to be used for the grave markers.

The 1-acre cemetery was consecrated 11 April 1857. The cost of the ground, walling, laying out etc was £1,324 (Sheahan). A plan was prepared in 1857 (this being referred to in the Burial Board Minutes) which shows the grave plots, final dividing line between consecrated and unconsecrated ground, boundary walls and lych gate, path system and chapels (D/R/8/2).

The cemetery was designed in conventional style, divided into two unequal halves, the larger to the south and east being for consecrated and the smaller to the north for unconsecrated ground. Each half focused on an Anglican and dissenters' chapel respectively to south and north, and ornamental trees were planted (OS, 1875).

The cemetery was extended in the 1930s to the north-east with a rectangular area of similar size. The chapels were demolished in the C20. The cemetery is closed to new burials and managed by Milton Keynes Council.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The market town of Stony Stratford in north Bucks straddles the line of the Roman Watling Street. The cemetery is located in a residential area south of the historic centre of the town, which was formerly open agricultural land. The ground within the cemetery is level.

The cemetery as laid out in 1856-7 covered 0.4ha. and was extended to the north-east in the 1930s. Local rubble stone boundary walls enclose the south-west, roadside, boundary, with moulded brick coping. The wall, against the road, drops in sections to accommodate elegant ornamental cast-iron railings with fleur-de-lis spearheads, as designed by the architect Law and depicted in the 1856 contract drawing (DC 12_39_2). These form the main survival of the original cemetery structures.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main entrance is off Calverton Road with a gateway set centrally in the south-west boundary. The gateway is framed by a timber lych gate with slate roof surmounted by an iron cross. It is supported by flanking stone walls which also support the elegant fleur-de-lis spear-tipped iron gates. This reflects exactly the structure erected in 1856 which appears on the contract drawing for the gateway and wall (DC 12_39_2).

The entrance gives access to the central path which immediately divides into two short curving spurs leading north-east to the sites of the two former chapels.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

The cemetery was designed in 1856 by Edmund Law with two small chapels offset from each other on either side of the central axis, with the dissenters' chapel to the north and the Anglican chapel to the south as shown in the contract drawings signed by Law and the builders Fishers of Northampton (DC 12_39_2). These were demolished in the later C20, leaving their sites as gravel spaces with small memorial gardens.

OTHER LAND

The cemetery is laid out in a grid plan with a backdrop of agricultural land beyond and reflects the two plans of 1856 (contract drawing DC 12_39_2; and as amended by 1857 (D/R/8/2)). The cemetery was constructed so it would be regarded with civic pride and therefore care was taken over the design; the layout remains largely intact. The paths that define the layout are integral to the design, as was the planting of trees. The dividing line

between consecrated and unconsecrated ground that was formerly marked by stones and iron railings and marked on the 1857 plan is no longer evident.

The collection of modest memorials includes Commonwealth War Graves for over 20 casualties, from both World Wars.

REFERENCES

Kelly, *Directory, Buckinghamshire* (1864), 499.

RIBA, *Directory of British Architects 1834-1900* (1993), 546-47. (entry for Edmund Law)

Rutherford, S, *The Victorian Cemetery* (2008).

Sheahan, J.J., *History and Topography of Buckinghamshire ...* (1862), 620-21.

MAPS

1812, Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing, 2" scale (BL).

OS 6" and 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition, s. 1877.

2nd edition, s. 1897.

Revised 1923

ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

Buckinghamshire Archives

D-RY/8/2 Plan of Stony Stratford Cemetery 1857

DC 12/39/1 Minute Book of Burial Board of the United Parishes of St. Giles and St. Mary Magdalene, Stony Stratford 1854-99

DC 12/39/1 Contract Book of the Burial Board of the United Parishes of St. Giles and St. Mary Magdalene, Stony Stratford: Contract Book Articles of agreement between Thomas and William Fisher of Northampton, builders and carpenters, and the Burial Board, with plans, May 1856.

PR 200/5/2 Churchwardens' Account Book, 1845-1856, with charity accounts and minutes of meetings relating to Burial Board, 1856-1865 [Stony Stratford] 1845-56

SR, KE, RJ October 2020.

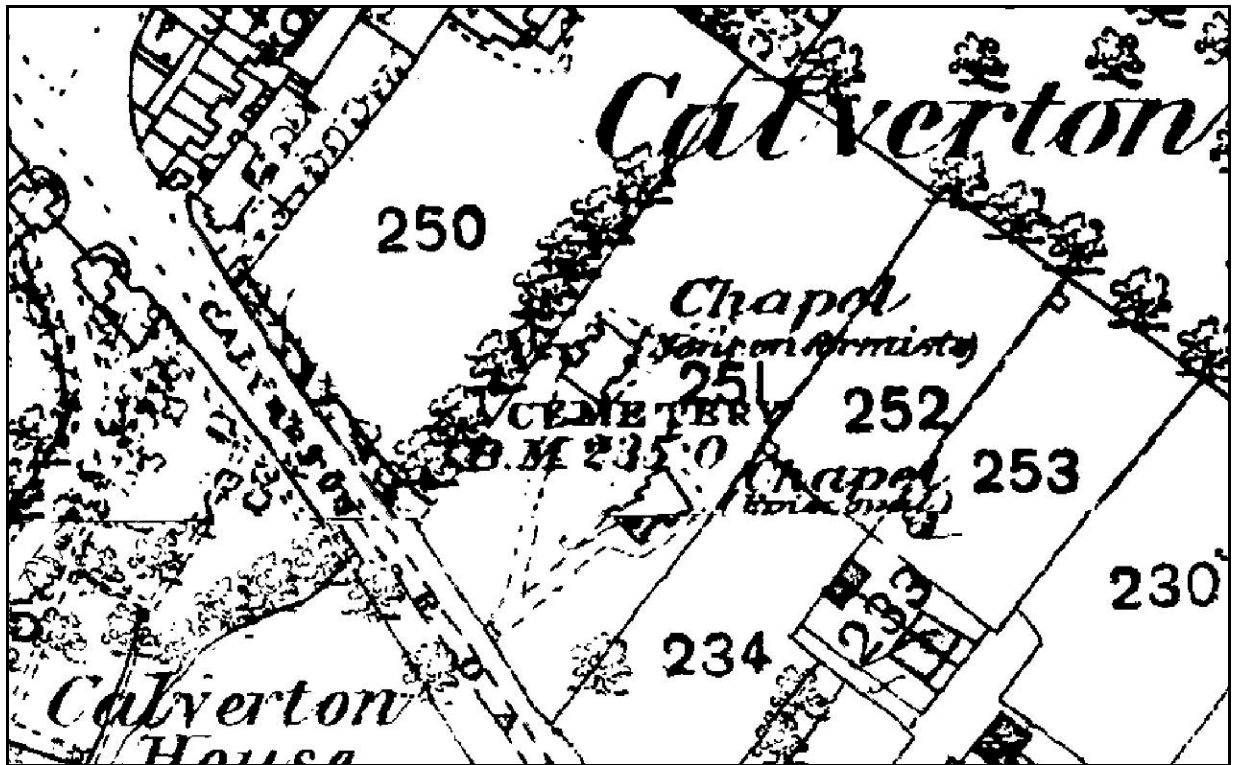
KEY HISTORIC VIEWS & FEATURES



Key to numbered features

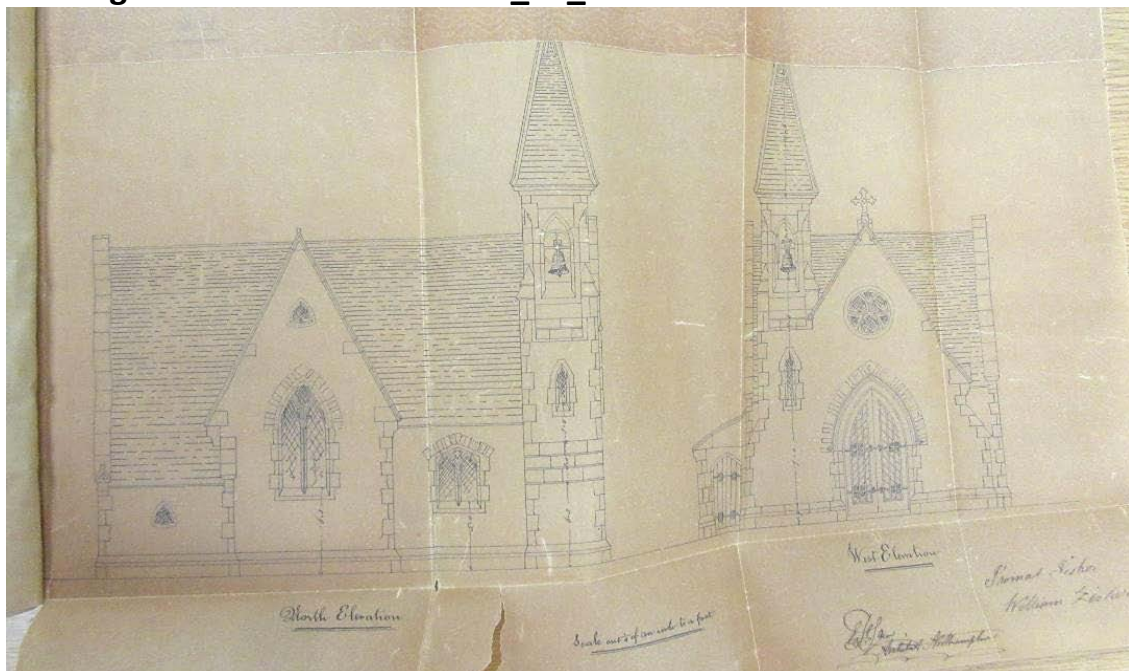
1. Entrance & lych gate set in roadside wall with iron railings	2. Site of Anglican Chapel
3. Site of Non-Conformist Chapel	

HISTORIC DOCUMENTS

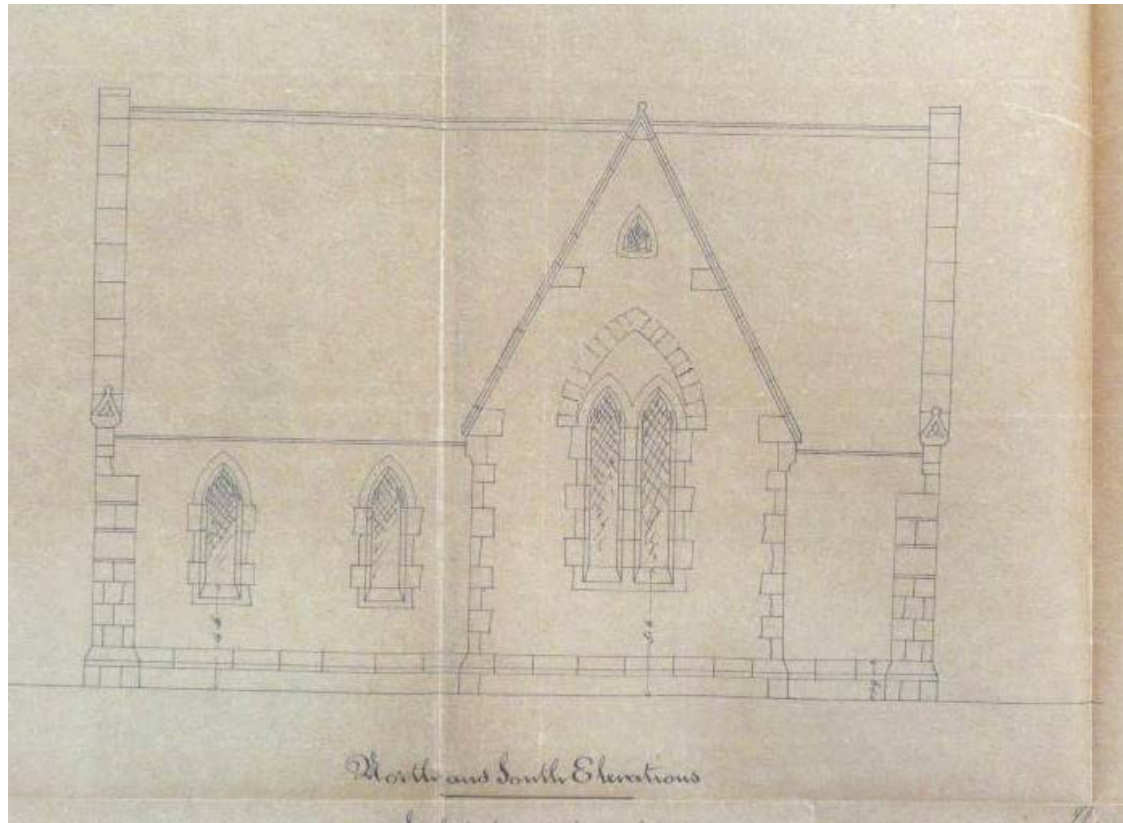


1878 Ordnance Survey 25" scale showing original planting of cemetery with conifers.
©Landmark Information Group

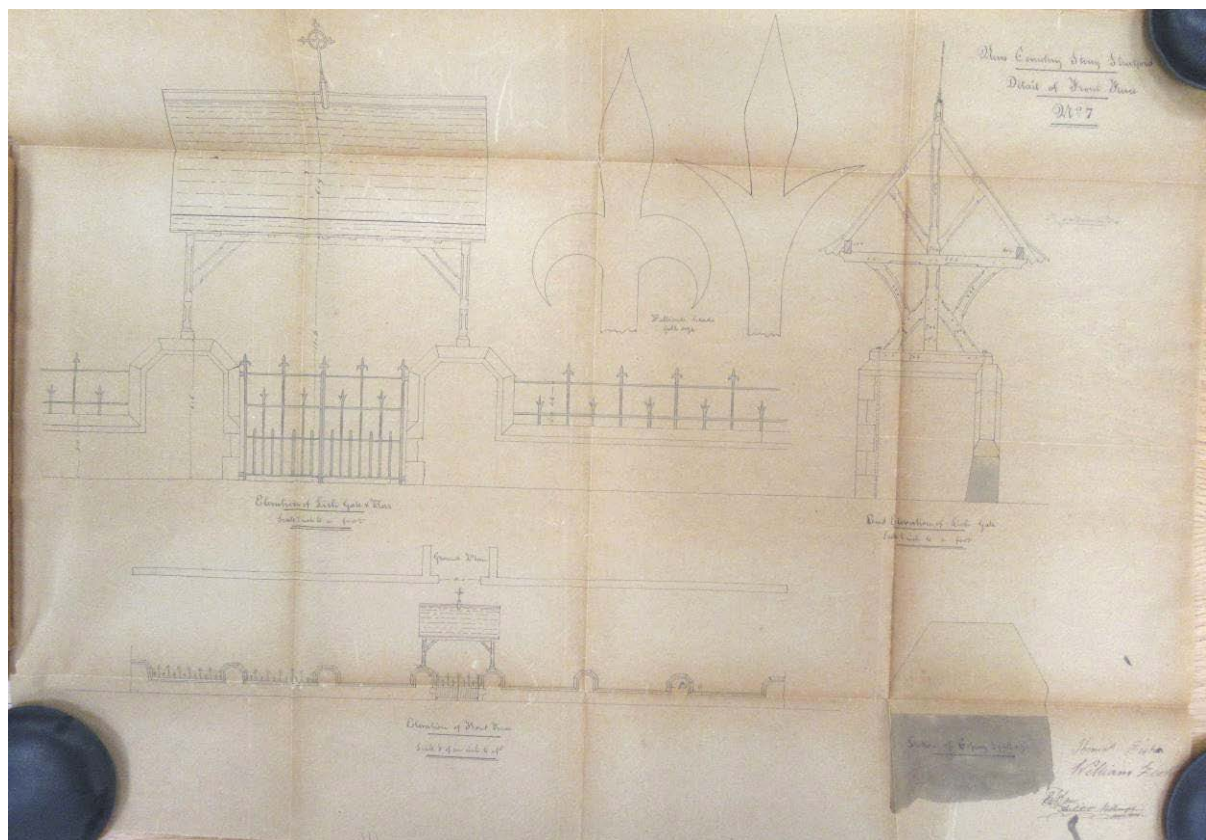
1856 Contract Drawings, Edmund Law of Northampton Buckinghamshire Archives DC 12_39_2



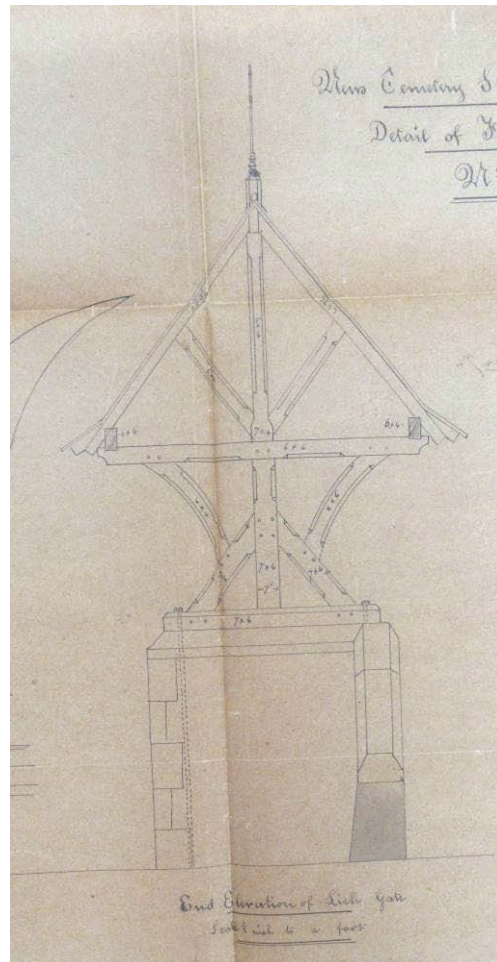
Anglican Chapel



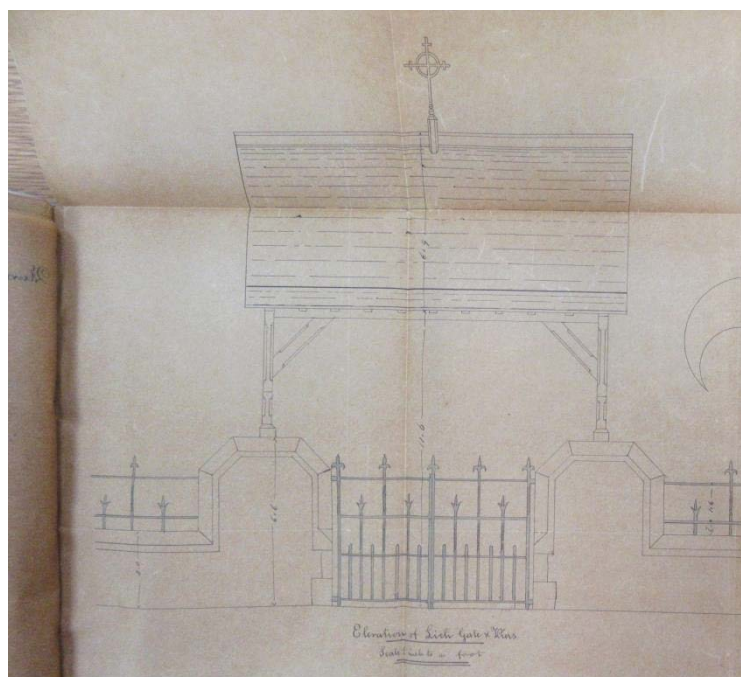
Dissenters' Chapel



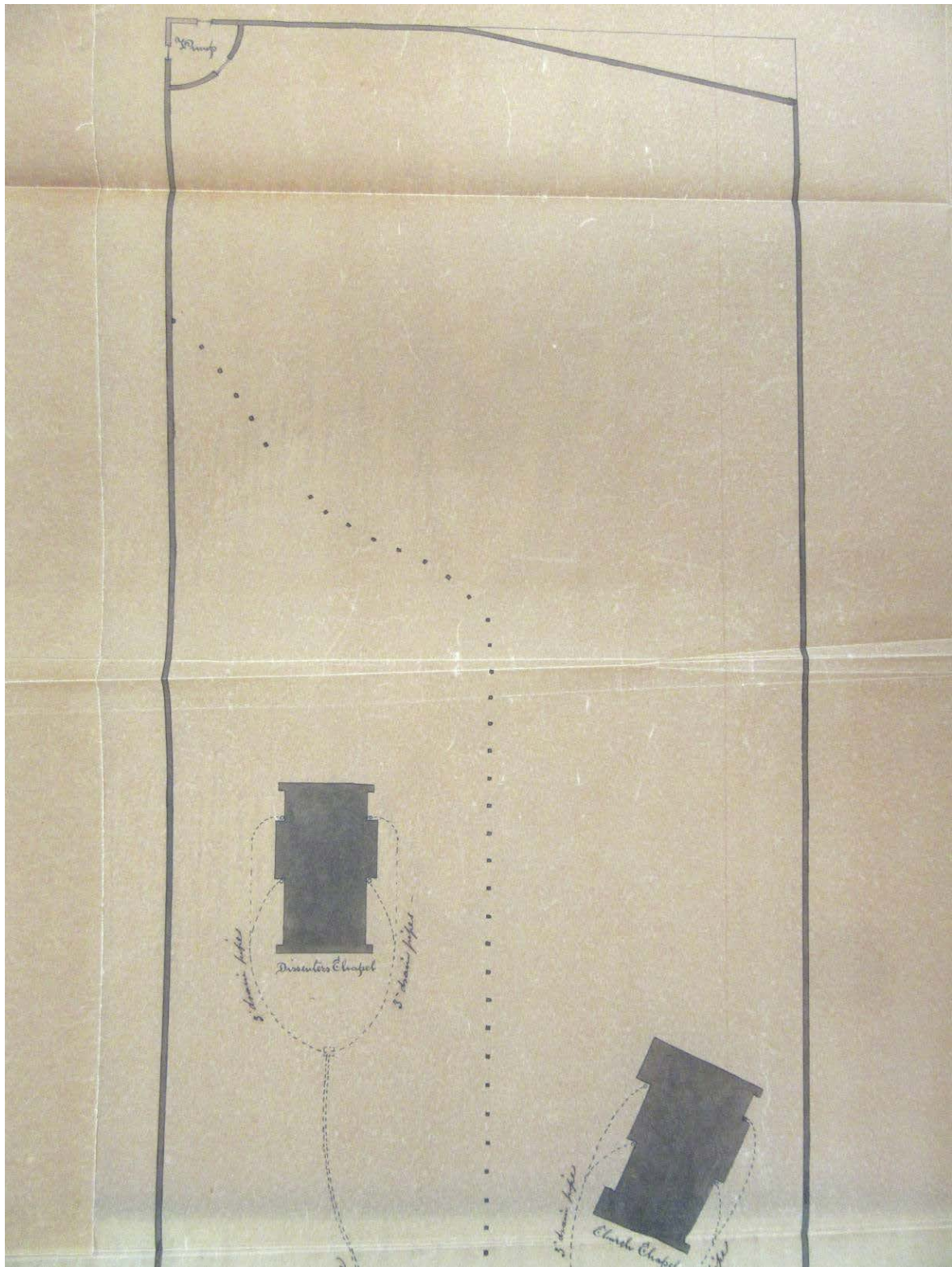
Lych Gate, roadside boundary wall, railings.



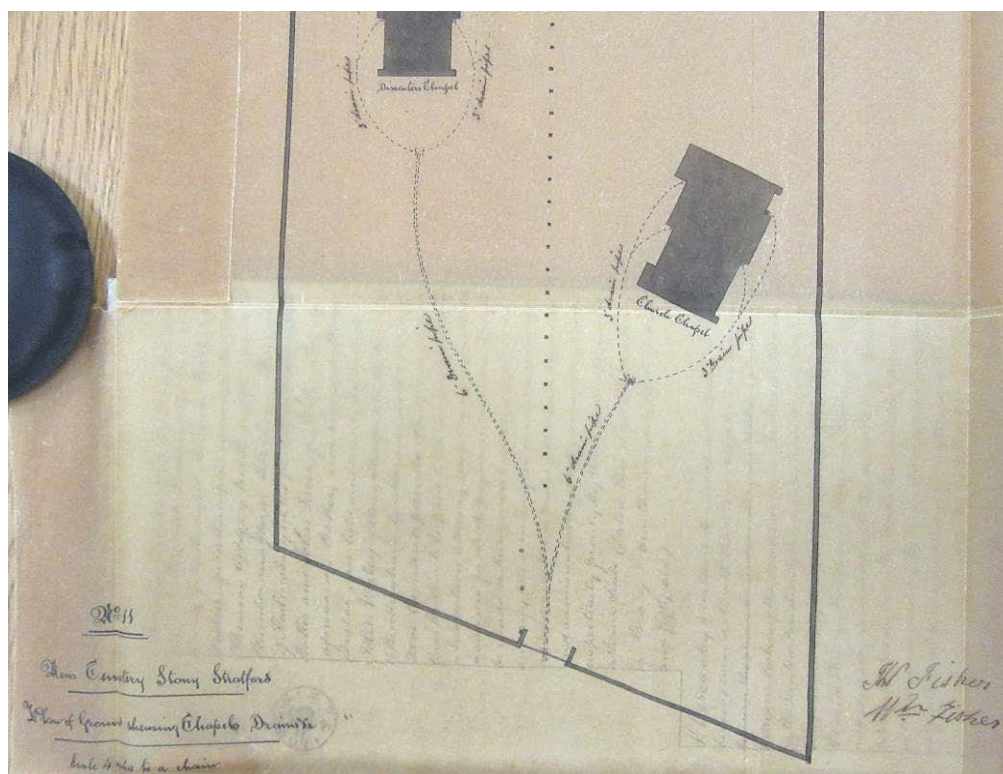
Lych Gate, side elevation



Lych Gate, front elevation

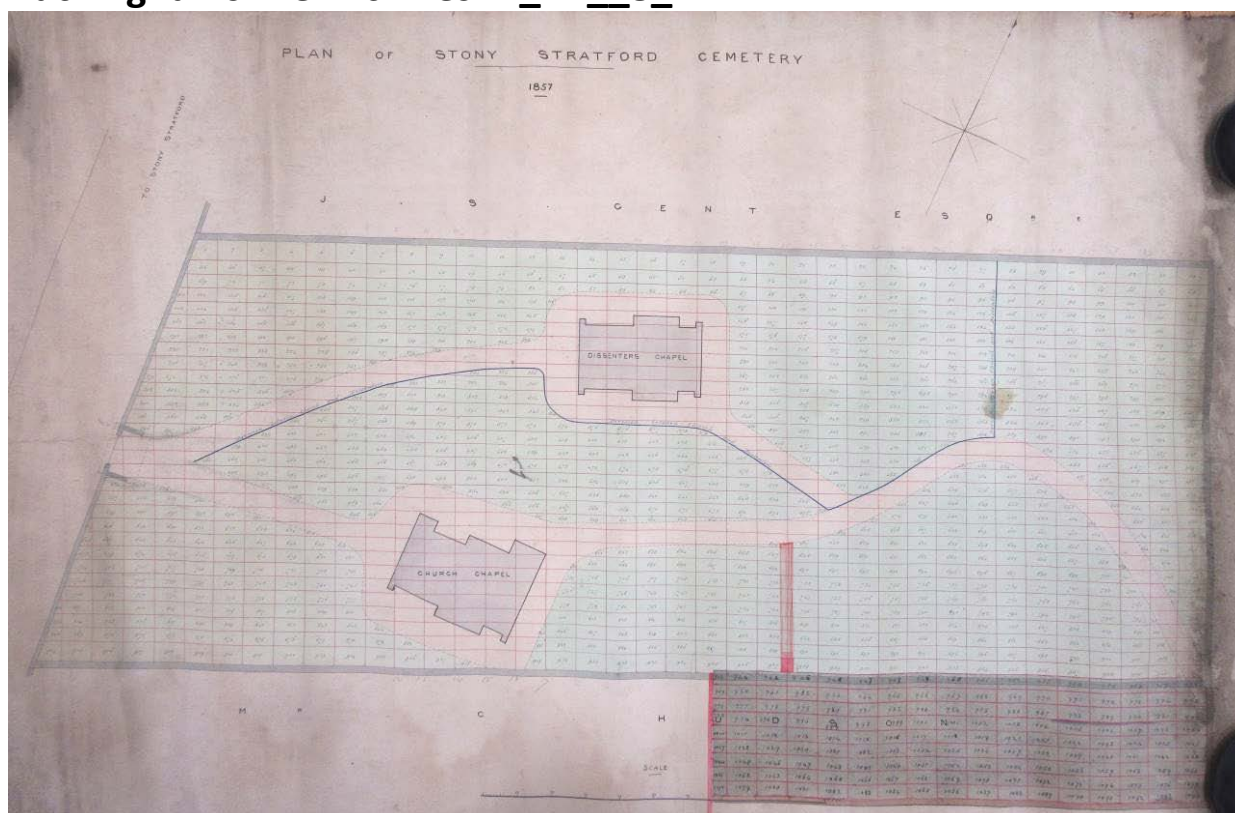


Plan of layout. Dotted line marks intended line of division between consecrated ground (to right) and unconsecrated ground.



1857 Site Plan

Buckinghamshire Archives D_RY__8_2



Plan as laid out. The line of division between consecrated ground (below) and unconsecrated ground was slightly different to that on the contract drawings plan.

CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHS

Ken Edwards



Lych gate and main entrance



Lych gate plaque, roadside boundary and main paths from lych gate.



Boundary wall



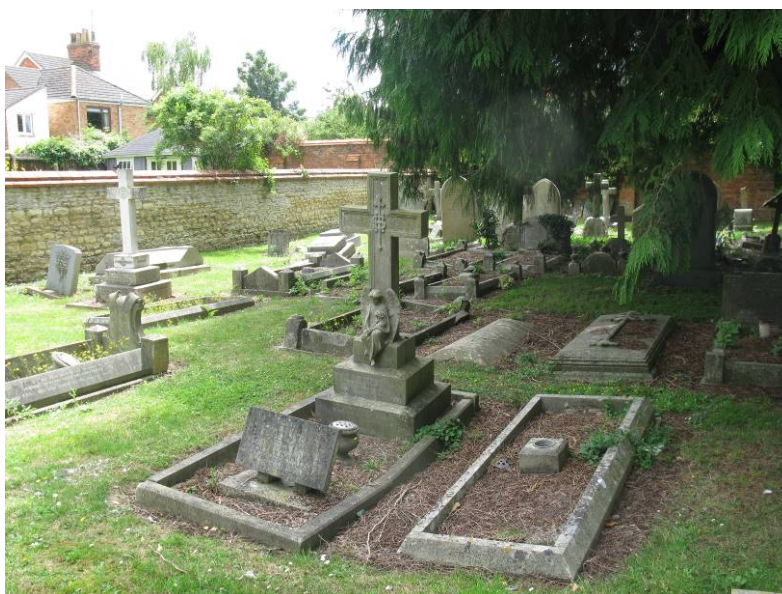
Boundary wall and sites of chapels (Anglican and Dissenters' respectively)



Monuments including an unusual iron marker



Monuments including an unusual iron vase



Monuments and boundary wall.