

CADW/ICOMOS REGISTER OF PARKS AND GARDENS
OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES

SITE DOSSIER

SITE NAME St Woolos Cemetery, Newport

REF. NO. PGW (Gt) 38

OS MAP 171 GRID REF. ST 294875

FORMER COUNTY Gwent UNITARY AUTHORITY Newport B.C. COMMUNITY
COUNCIL Newport

DESIGNATIONS Listed building: Grade
National Park AONB SSSI NNR ESA GAM SAM CA

SITE EVALUATION Grade II

Primary reasons for grading

Well preserved mid Victorian landscaped garden cemetery

TYPE OF SITE

Landscaped garden cemetery

MAIN PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION

1850s; 1949

VISITED BY/DATE Elisabeth Whittle/May 1991

THE PLEASURE GARDEN

Grid ref ST 295875

Date/style 1850s; 1949/landscaped garden cemetery

GENERAL DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND LAYOUT

St Woolos Cemetery is a large landscaped cemetery of about 85 acres situated on a south-westward facing slope on the western edge of Newport. It is roughly rectangular in shape, tapering slightly towards the south-western end, and is bounded by built-up areas and roads on all sides.

The cemetery was first laid out in the early 1850s, and the first burial was of Able Seaman Cooper, on 18 July 1854. Originally the cemetery only extended a short way to the west of the main entrance, the boundary being on a line with the western end of the small Coed Melyn Park to the north. Before the 1880s a further area had been taken in to the south-west, extending it to the present-day avenue of pines which runs NW-SE across the western end of the cemetery. Soldiers killed at the battle of Rorke's Drift (Boer War) are buried in this part (plot no Con D.127, block 32). The cemetery was further extended to its present western boundary in the early 20th century, and the grid pattern of grass plots planted with trees and shrubs in the western part was established in 1949.

The original area was laid out in the 1850s with straight paths between large grass areas informally planted with trees and shrubs. There are two main entrances, both with gateways and lodges, on the north and south sides, and between them runs a curving path. Just inside the main entrance, on the south side, is a circular area (now laid out as a War Memorial, but originally a circle of trees) on either side of which are two funerary chapels, that on the west in Romanesque style (Nonconformist) and that on the east in Gothic style (Church in Wales). There is a further smaller chapel, in simple Gothic style (Roman Catholic), near the north end of the cemetery, which was added slightly later (before 1880s). This earliest part of the cemetery retains its original layout. Near the chapels are most of the oldest graves, a number dating from the 1850s. Many have much marble ornamental sculptural work, including angels, a boy, and a carving of a ship.

The cemetery is planted informally with trees and shrubs, in particular with evergreens. Yews (including Irish), cypresses, rhododendrons and pines predominate, with rows of pines along present and former boundaries. The circular garden between the two chapels is flanked by two cedars on the south and two redwoods on the north. Recently 30 Maidenhair trees (*Ginkgo biloba*) have been planted.

STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

The cemetery is divided up into square and rectangular areas by straight paths, now tarmacked. The original area at the north-eastern end has larger rectangular divisions. These are cut across by a serpentine path winding between the two entrances on the north and south sides. Opposite the main entrance, on the south side, is a circular path, part of the original layout, around a 2nd World War Memorial (a central column with radiating paths). The paths vary in width from narrow footpaths to ones wide enough for vehicles.

BUILT COMPONENTS

The cemetery is bounded on the S, E, N, and E end of NW sides by a mortared stone wall. The main entrance is near the E end of the S side, and consists of a Gothic stone arch with a small side gate to the west, flanked by low stone walls topped with ironwork, at the end

of which are stone piers with conical tops. The archway is closed by simple ironwork gates. Inside the entrance, to the west, is a two-storey Gothic gabled lodge. The other entrance is on the north side, with simple iron gates between octagonal stone piers with conical tops, with a small side gate on the E, and a two-storey stone/tile/half-timbered lodge (20th-century) on the west side, inside the cemetery.

There are three chapels in the cemetery, all dating from the 1850s. To the E and W of the circle inside the main entrance are two, with massive porches facing the circle, at their E and W ends. To the west is the Nonconformist chapel, built in stone in Romanesque style with an octagonal tower at its W end. To the east is the Church in Wales chapel built of stone in Gothic style. The Roman Catholic chapel lies to the NW, near the NW boundary. It is smaller and simpler, with a gabled roof, built in Gothic style. In the centre of the north-east (oldest) end is a small gabled stone building in Gothic style. It is now semi-derelict, and its original purpose is unknown (probably utilitarian).

ARCHITECTURAL ORNAMENTS

Most of the oldest and most elaborate graves are situated near the two chapels near the main entrance. There are a number dating from the 1850s with a considerable sculptural content (angels, a boy, carving of a ship etc.)

PLANTED COMPONENTS

The cemetery is largely grass, planted informally with trees and shrubs, the trees being overwhelmingly evergreen, in particular yews, cypresses and pines. There is some formal planting along boundaries, present and past.

There are rows of pines along the S and NW boundaries, and an avenue of pines flanking the path that originally formed the W boundary (first westward extension, before 1880s). Trees within the cemetery are dotted about in a fairly random fashion, except for a group of cypresses around the Roman Catholic chapel, and trees within the circle between the other two chapels. The circle is flanked by two cedars on the south and two redwoods on the N. One path at the northern end has also been planted with an avenue of prunus (20th-century).

The cemetery is also dotted with shrubs, both evergreen and deciduous, and in particular with Irish yews and rhododendrons.

In the recent past 30 Maidenhair trees (*Ginkgo biloba*) have been planted in the cemetery.

Reconstructions of original planted features

None

Special collections of garden plants

None

Documented living plants

None

Other (including elements of nature conservation interest)

None

ESSENTIAL SETTING AND VIEWS BEYOND THE SITE

Not applicable

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES

None

SURVIVAL OF INDIVIDUAL COMPONENTS

Structural components: all
Built components: all
Architectural ornaments: all
Planted components: most

SOURCES

Primary

Deed of Settlement of the Public Cemetery Company (1842): Newport Reference Library, ref. pM160 614.61 NEW H.C.

Secondary

Buckingham, M., and R. Frame, *The Haunted Holy Ground* (Newport, no date).
Information from Director of Leisure Services, Newport Borough Council.

To be appended: 1:10,000 map of site, marked with boundaries, viewpoints etc.; colour photographs of site, photocopies of relevant material, where available.
