



31 January 2025

## Conditions in the Garden of Remembrance

To Whom it may Concern

All Saints' Churchyard, and the Garden of Remembrance within it, is an incredibly special place to us and to our community. We endeavour to preserve it as a beautiful place where people can go to remember their loved ones and to enjoy the peaceful surroundings.

Therefore, we are extremely sorry for the recent experiences of those who visit graves in the Garden of Remembrance. Some of you may have noticed the very poor ground conditions there. The lower section is completely waterlogged and the pathways have become muddy and unpleasant. As you can appreciate this is very distressing for people visiting the resting place of their loved ones. I want to reassure you that we are doing everything we can to try to alleviate the problem within the constraints placed upon us. I have therefore written a summary below of the factors that have led to the deterioration of this section of the Garden and what we have been doing to resolve it. When faced with a multi-faceted problem like this, understanding what factors have caused it is an important part of the process and can take some time.

We do appreciate that none of these factors or explanations make matters better for those visiting the graves of their loved ones and we're confident that with all the efforts going into this, things will improve in the future.

## Challenging Factors

### 1. Shape of the Garden of Remembrance

Over the last two years, the final two or three rows of ashes plots have been completed at the lower corner of the Garden of Remembrance. Newer plots inevitably attract more visitors than older ones. The V-shape of the Garden of Remembrance has meant that most of the recent visiting in the last 2-3 years has been concentrated in this area which is smaller than the section higher up. Putting this together with the fact that it is at the end to which the water drains down, has led to the unacceptable conditions. With hindsight, ashes plots could have begun at the bottom of the V and worked up towards the top and that would have alleviated some of the problems we are now facing.

### 2. Faculty Permissions

Almost all significant work we carry out in the churchyard needs to be done with a faculty (permission from the Winchester Diocese). Applying for faculties is a long process which takes time to complete, requiring approvals from our PCC, the inspecting church architect, and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). This process is in part to protect us from doing something which might cause upset or environmental harm, albeit with good intentions. A proposed faculty gives people a chance to object, so

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it is important to ensure that whatever plan is proposed, it is something on which all interested parties agree. For example, whilst some people may be in favour of tarmac pathways, others would not, so we need to bear that in mind.

### **3. Legal Considerations**

The other reason faculties are required is to protect us from inadvertently breaking the law. It is a legal offence to disturb cremated remains. This means we are heavily restricted on the type of pathways we could look to install if we felt that were the right way forward.

### **4. Drainage Challenges**

Over the last 12 months, our volunteers have been out in the rain observing the flow of the water in and around the churchyard. They have been able to make several different observations. They have observed the slope of Main Road being towards the churchyard at all three angles, meaning rainwater flows into the churchyard both from the Hythe end and the Marchwood end. They have also observed a storm water pipe potentially from one of the houses above the churchyard draining into the Garden of Remembrance.

### **5. Water Leaks**

There have been water leaks on the Main Road which have affected conditions in the churchyard and added to the waterlogged conditions. We are also observing our water meter carefully as it is indicating a small leak somewhere in the piping from the road to the church. Investigating this leak will be almost impossible in a churchyard and we are confident the leak is small enough not to be a significant contributing factor.

### **6. Shady Area and Inclement Weather**

Our volunteers have also identified the lack of sunlight by which the Garden of Remembrance is affected. This has been caused by the growth of trees and shrubbery surrounding the Garden. This means that even when the sun shines, the Garden is in the shade which therefore exacerbates the problem. There is also a scientific consensus that volume of rainfall is increasing, certainly in its intensity, which is unhelpful for areas which are more liable to flooding.

### **7. Local Comparisons**

Dibden Golf Course is a valid local comparison with similar grounds to All Saints' Churchyard, similar soil type, location and undulating land contours. In winter, the golf course is often caused to close certain holes due to flooding for similar reasons to the churchyard.

## **What we have been doing and what we are doing next**

Our approach has been multi-faceted. In the spring of last year, we identified that our primary aim was to reduce the amount of water draining into the Garden of Remembrance. We have taken two approaches to this detailed in points 1 and 2 below. Further work has been listed in points 3 to 6.

### **1. Volunteer Drainage Work**

Having surveyed the challenging nature of water flow, our small team of volunteers has been digging channels from the road and on the edge of the churchyard, in an attempt to direct the water into the existing drainage ditch. There has also been work undertaken to clear the existing drainage ditch to ensure this is not part of the problem. There is one further drainage channel which we are about to commission. This channel would run from the bottom of the Garden of Remembrance to the existing drainage ditch alongside it. We are waiting for the archaeologist visit (explained in point 2) before we go ahead with this one.

### **2. Professional Drainage Work**

Our Operations Manager approached three landscaping companies last summer to visit the churchyard and propose a drainage solution. The PCC were presented with these different options in September and were pleased to approve one. Since then, we have been in the process of applying for a faculty to carry

out this drainage work. The DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee) were unwilling to grant permission for the works without further investigation. They have requested an archaeologist visit the site in order to rule out the potential to disturb any cremated remains. We have now managed to agree a date for this visit which will take place on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February. We are also hoping for some advice on the pathways from the archaeologist.

### **3. Improving Light**

Our volunteers are working at thinning the shrubbery surrounding the Garden to improve light to the area. Any tree work in the Churchyard needs to be carried out with a faculty permission along with several approvals, plans and professional quotes. We are setting about identifying which trees are causing the most shade. We will then make an assessment as to whether it might be possible to reduce the height of these trees. Unfortunately, this is sometimes not permitted due to the challenge of maintaining the overall shape of the tree concerned.

### **4. New Ashes plots**

We are no longer carrying out burials at the bottom of the Garden of Remembrance, even though there is still some space to do so. We have instead allocated a line of new plots at the top end of the garden. Hopefully this will alleviate further services and visits and therefore not further increase the footfall in that area.

### **5. New Bench for Garden of Remembrance**

Last year we received a generous gift of funding for a new bench specifically for people visiting the Garden of Remembrance. We have successfully applied for a faculty for the installation of this bench and we are hoping it will be installed this Spring when the weather improves.

### **6. Pathways**

If we manage to solve the drainage problem, the existing grass pathways may then become usable again. However, it will take some time to establish this. If we are not able to solve the drainage problem satisfactorily, there are some options for pathways should this be necessary. One option we are currently reviewing is having shingle poured into plastic grids. These grids prevent the shingle from becoming scattered around and looking unsightly. They also prevent the shingle from being trodden into the ground. This would be a significant project and create a significant disturbance to the Garden of Remembrance whilst it was being carried out. We are also unsure whether we would be able to secure a faculty for such a project.

We are currently looking at scattering shingle along the muddy paths simply to improve the conditions and drainage. This would not be a long-term solution but may provide a more stable footing for those visiting graves.

I am extremely grateful to the small team of dedicated volunteers who give up so much of their time to care for the churchyard. If you would like to contribute to this work in any way or have any expertise to offer in any of the above areas, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact the office in the first place at [office@dibdenchurches.org](mailto:office@dibdenchurches.org) or 023 8084 3204.

Kind Regards

**Peter Toller**

Rector

Updated overleaf >>

## **Conditions in the Garden of Remembrance: update**

On Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025, Peter and Nicky visited All Saints' Churchyard with Sarah Feltham, Assistant DAC Secretary and Simon Cramp, DAC Landscaping/ Trees Advisor.

It was an encouraging and helpful visit with suggestions on how we can look to address the ground conditions in this area.

The overall suggestions were as follows:

- Hand dig six-inch trenches between the rows in the Burial of Ashes area. The centre of this trench would be deeper than the edges and contain a porous pipe, leading ultimately to the drainage ditch which runs parallel to the road
- Fill the trench with a layer of hardcore
- Place gravel grids over the entire trench, butting up to the memorial stones
- At the end of each row, curve the path around the end creating a continuous path, snaking around
- At the top of the grass walkway from the car park, create a gravel path leading to a gravelled/ planted area where visitors can pause and pray
- The advisor recommended a staged approach so that any amendments can be made along the way

Our next stage will be to secure three quotes from landscape gardeners and put together our proposal for the DAC.