

CREMATION AREA – ALL SAINTS CHURCHYARD

1. During the past 12 months there has been criticism from villagers that the cremation area in All Saints churchyard is not up to the standard it should be. At least three villagers have demurred from interring the ashes of close relatives in the cremation area because of this and against this background the Parish Council set up a cross sectional working group of villagers to review the situation.

2. The working group consisted of:

Cllr Alan Behagg (chairman)
Cllr Pippa Wilkinson
Colin Bryant – representing the PCC
Jeremy Taylor – representing The Crondall Society
Kate Castle – representing the church community
Richard Puddephat – representing the church community
Brenda Bryant – representing the village community

3. Meetings took place on 6th January, 15th February, 22nd March and 19th April. There was an open meeting with the village on 7th June and subsequently a further meeting on 7th July to discuss the points made by villagers at this open meeting.

Development Thoughts

4. The original site was established in June 2005. It consists of an area of land belonging to the Council on the east side of the churchyard measuring approximately 73' x 22'. It is a grassed area, bordered by a footpath on one side and ewe hedges on the other three. There are two green oak panels erected on the eastern side of the plot. At the time of writing there are 22 ashes plots on the site each marked by 4 inch brass plaques inscribed numerically A1 to A22, although plots A1- A3 contain no remains. Details of individuals identified by number are held in the parish register kept by the Clerk. The original intention was that interred individuals would be recorded by plaques and inscriptions attached to the oak panels, but only 9 such plaques have been placed.

5. At its first meeting in January the working group drew the conclusion that the current site was not up to the high standards normally associated with village facilities. It believed that 'something must be done' and set as its aim:

To establish a suitable cremation area within All Saints churchyard for the village of Crondall by developing or redeveloping the current cremation area

6. The working group believed the current site was unsuitable primarily because individual interments could not be identified and this made the site itself impersonal leading to a natural reluctance to inter remains. There was also concern about the maintenance of the site – the grass, on occasions, being too long or unkempt and individuals had, quite naturally, placed flowers, real or artificial, on or near the interred ashes in receptacles of varying shapes and sizes which made the area appear untidy. This did not lend harmony to the site but it was recognised that this was a

different order of problem. There was also real concern about the two green oak panels which were considered to be both unattractive and also impractical.

7. From this the working group concluded that any solution should allow individual interred plots to be identified and that a high priority should be given to making the site easy to maintain as well as, somehow, establishing a quite and reflective garden in this part of the churchyard.

8. It was felt that the green oak panels should be removed and that a brick wall built along the northern side of the plot to give privacy. Privacy on the eastern and southern sides would continue to be provided by the ewe hedge. As the interred plots were now to be identified it was felt there was no need for any individual to be identified on the wall but it was for consideration that this wall might have a suitable and general inscription on it – if deemed appropriate.

9. There was also concern for the size of the plot and the working group recognised the need to ensure that this cremation area had space for interred ashes for the foreseeable future which it determined as about 15 years.

10. The working group were cognisant of the need to maintain the integrity of the existing interees and all the proposals advanced had to accommodate this without involving the ashes plots being moved or altered.

11. Prior to the open meeting on 7th June the working group had consulted with Haven Memorials in Church Crookham to consider tablets that could be used to identify ashes plots. The tablets used in the closed cremation area in the south wall of the churchyard are 18x18 inches and were considered too big for the size of the current plot. After consideration the working group favoured a desk style tablet 14 x 12 inches with a flower container sunk into the short horizontal surface of the desk shape. (see photograph below) A smaller 12 x 12 inch tablet would have given space for more interments but this size did not allow two names to be inscribed on the stonework and the working group thought there was value, both emotionally and practically, in having double plots with inscription space for two names which the 14 x 12 inch tablet allows. Such tablets were priced at around £600 depending on the stone and inscription.



12. The flower container also allowed a greater order and indeed tidiness relating to floral tributes.

13. There was concern that the tablets should be made of stone and of a colour appropriate for a country churchyard. It was recognised that it was difficult to be too prescriptive in these matters especially at a time of great stress and therefore some form of choice on the colour of stone should be allowed.

14. It was also felt that the surface of the cremation area should not be grass but gravel as this would reduce maintenance and avoid damage to the tablets when the grass was strimmed.

15. There is sufficient space remaining in the cremation area for approximately 120 tablets which will give approximately 12-15 years of potential use. It was noted that it would be possible to expand the existing cremation area southwards to meet up with the cremation wall on the south east end of the churchyard and while not part of the current proposals the potential for this expansion should be noted.

16. A rough order of costs for developing the site as described above, and as shown in an artists impression below, was ascertained and an indicative price is that this can be done for between £6,000 to £8,000 in total plus VAT. Detailed quotations would, of course, need to be obtained in due course if it is determined to proceed with the project.

17. It was noted that the current interred plots need not be effected by the development of the cremation area but an opportunity does exist for individuals to place tablets on the existing interred plots if they so wish. Alternatively the name plaques on the oak panels, once removed, could be used to identify individual plots as they currently exist. Neither option excludes the development of the cremation area as outlined by the working group.

The Village Meeting

18. Prior to the meeting on 7th June publicity had been advanced in the parish magazine and comments had been invited. Eighteen people attended the meeting and four main ideas were put forward.

- a) Instead of building a wall only on the north side of the cremation area, build it along both the north and the east side to ensure greater privacy.
Comment: A good idea but this would add considerably to the cost.
- b) Develop the two areas now. **Comment:** Again a good idea but it would add to the cost.
- c) Abandon the idea of tablets and establish a columbarium – examples were shown of such in a churchyard in Wales (the columbarium envisaged was a cabinet type structure about 6’ long by 4’ high and 3’ deep in which

ashes could be stored in draw type receptacles). **Comment:** The working group had severe reservations about the appropriateness of such a monument in a country churchyard. It was also felt that the draw type containers would be vulnerable to vandals. It was recommended that this idea should not be developed.

- d) Inscribe on the wall a Christian inscription or link. **Comment:** There was concern about this as the cremation area is not just for Christians.

Recommendations

19. Against the background that it is possible to leave the existing interees in place when the cremation area is developed the working group recommended

- a) Establish a cremation area with stone desk style tablets 14 x 12 inches identifying individual (or double) plots
 - b) Surface the area with gravel on a membrane base
 - c) Remove the existing green oak walls.
- Build a wall along the north side of the cremation area (unless Council is minded to extend the wall on the eastern side)

20. Although not part of the remit of the working group Council is strongly urged to review existing burial regulations.

A Behagg
Chair of Cremation Area Working Group

11 July 2011

Annex

Artist impression of cremation area after development.

