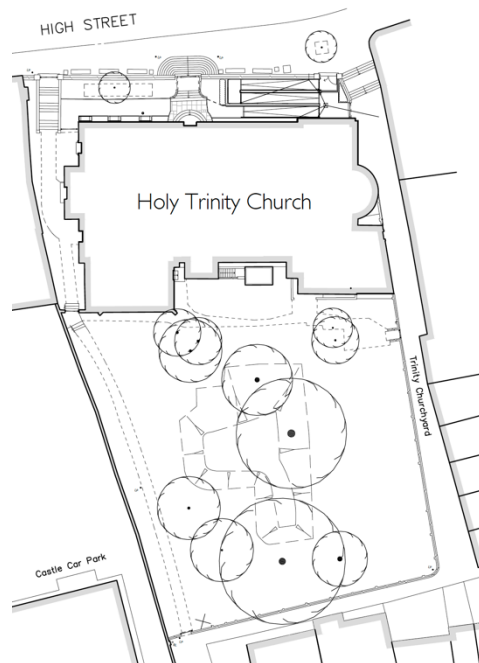


## Holy Trinity Churchyard Management Plan

### Context

Holy Trinity Church is Guildford's Civic Church and the venue for all major Borough services (e.g., Remembrance Day, Mayor – Making and the Crown Court Services). Its appearance is thus important. But this position also offers our Eco Church the possibility to communicate, by example, the importance of conservation and the encouragement of wildlife in urban centres, along with places for restoration and contemplation.

Holy Trinity Church is blessed with a historic churchyard, covering just over 0.15 hectares, lying on the south side of the church. The churchyard slopes uphill from the south elevation of the church and is enclosed by cast iron railings on a low brick wall along a public footpath on the east and south sides. A high brick wall encloses the west side of the churchyard. A footpath runs south across the churchyard between gates in the southwest and northwest corners. A ramp also leads up from the High Street allowing wheelchair access from the High Street into the church and alongside the churchyard to Sydenham Road.



*Figure 1: Plan of Holy Trinity Church and Churchyard*

The churchyard has been in use since the thirteenth century. However, almost all the monuments now visible date from the mid eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century. In 1856, the churchyard was closed in accordance with new national legislation on urban graveyards. Several burials took place after 1856 (the last in 1928) mainly of family members joining relatives previously interred. Most of the existing gravestones mark interments made between 1770 and 1856. Some stones were moved in 1887 to clear the area for the east end extension. The spoil dug out for the foundations of the east end extension was used to form the large mound in the churchyard. In the northwest corner is the Elkins tomb, which is Grade II listed. Other chest tombs mark the burials of eminent Guildford families. Particularly notable in the churchyard is a memorial statue to Geoffrey Brooke Parnell and the men who fell with him at the Battle of the Somme in July 1916. Recently, an area on the southeast side was dedicated as a memorial garden for the interment of ashes.

### Holy Trinity Churchyard Group

For many years the grass in the churchyard has been cut by Guildford Borough Council. Their Parks & Gardens' staff have also undertaken other grounds' maintenance work, but it was clear that the large area required more than their resources allowed. We were grateful for the work undertaken by Guildford BC. The Holy Trinity Churchyard Group was established about five years ago to take on responsibility for looking after the churchyard and provide the extra hours and commitment required. The Churchyard Group met approximately twice a year to do upkeep and planting work. It became apparent that this was insufficient and that more regular working parties were needed. The Group now meets approximately every two months. Individual members of the Group work in the churchyard more frequently, and we have adopted a policy by which individual members of the Churchyard Group take on a responsibility for particular areas, e.g., the Justice Garden, the High Street Garden, etc.

In 2019, a Management Agreement was signed between the PCC, the Incumbent, and Guildford BC. Guildford Borough Council's overall responsibilities for the churchyard are summarised in Section 3. This includes *'the grass 10 times per annum and perform shrub bed maintenance bi-annually and remove fallen trees or branches where are unsafe or causing obstruction or nuisance'* and *'at reasonable intervals to clear all rubbish and muck and anything else that may cause annoyance or nuisance to parishioners visiting the Churchyard'*.

Building on the long-term relationship developed between the Parish Office and the Guildford BC Gardens' team the Churchyard Group have now established an excellent relationship with Operational & Technical Services of Guildford BC. The schedule for mowing the grass, along with the other work routinely undertaken will be discussed with them to maximise the wildlife opportunities of this precious green oasis in the town centre. There is some flexibility in terms of the agreement above, to the benefit of both Holy Trinity Church and Guildford BC.

### **Management Principles and Guidelines**

Being protected from any kind of development over the centuries, churchyards such as at Holy Trinity Church have been able to protect and nurture their biodiversity resources in harmony with their original purpose for burial. The day to day and longer-term management of our churchyard is informed by various principles and guidelines.

#### *The Many Roles of the Churchyard*

This Plan focuses on the management of the churchyard for the conservation of wildlife. Churchyards in towns are obvious refuges for wildlife in an environment largely lacking in appropriate habitats and are an important source of food and shelter. Holy Trinity Churchyard is such a place and should be managed with sympathy and understanding for wildlife. But this will only be achieved if it is undertaken in sympathy with and accommodates the needs and wishes of the congregation, residents of Guildford and visitors. Holy Trinity churchyard is:

- i. a sacred space holding mortal remains
- ii. a place of respect and commemoration for the departed
- iii. an historic place
- iv. a space of reflection, beauty and restoration
- v. a haven for grasses, wildflowers, trees, birds, butterflies and other wildlife
- vi. an expression of the parish's environmental priorities
- vii. an occasional setting for the parish's work with young people.
- viii. a place that provides a feeling of welcome and a safe and easy access to the church buildings and to the graves

#### *Being a Good Neighbour*

We are very conscious that many people walk through or alongside the churchyard and its visual appearance is important. We hope that this green space will be uplifting and provide enjoyment and beauty to enhance their day. It is also overlooked by our residential neighbours and users of the pub. We are aware that 'wild areas' can sometimes be confused with untidy, abandoned and uncared for spaces. Informing people what we are trying to achieve is important. We will endeavour to ensure that plant waste is removed frequently and conservation measures which sometimes look like unkempt areas of waste (e.g., bug hotels) are appropriately managed and located. We do not have space for composting green waste. We have, however, agreed with GBC Parks that our bagged green waste will be collected. This can then be recycled and turned into mulch.

### *Communication is Essential*

As was stated above, informing people about what we are trying to achieve in the churchyard is important. This is done through communication. While signage is one approach, personal contact and discussion with interested parties is another and arguably more important. For this reason,

- a) a letter will be written, once a year, to all residents/businesses located in Trinity Churchyard, communicating what we are trying to do in the churchyard, what we have achieved over the year, and our plans for the forthcoming year.
- b) The recent installation of two Interpretation Panels (one in the churchyard and the other in the High Street Garden) inform visitors about the rich heritage of our Georgian church and the churchyard. We draw the attention to the conservation work we are doing and our membership of Eco Church. It is intended that we will also erect smaller information boards in the churchyard to explain why and how particular areas in the churchyard are managed.
- c) If necessary, the Property Manager and/or the Parish Office will communicate with the Guildford BC team as soon as they arrive if there are any changes to what is required.
- d) The Property Manager will continue to monitor how the churchyard is being used, especially if there is any vandalism or abuse and discuss with the office, Police Community Support Officers and Guildford BC teams.

### **Management plan and schedule**

The churchyard will normally be managed following these guidelines. To help prepare this plan, we have undertaken a survey of the birds, plants and other wildlife etc (See Appendix 1). This is an ongoing survey as species will change through the seasons, and new plants will be added. A full bat survey was undertaken in 2017/8. A plan of the churchyard designates different areas for different forms of management (Figure 2). These are denoted by different styles of shading.

All those who help with the care of the churchyard must be clear about the aims of the management and should be given a copy of the management schedule. We will endeavour to keep local people informed about our aims and practices, especially those whose property faces the churchyard.

### **Grass areas**

There should be clear boundaries between closely cut grass and the longer wildflower areas demonstrating that the churchyard is well managed rather than neglected. When possible, grass cuttings will be raked up and removed from wildflower areas. Removal of grass clippings from other areas is also desirable, if possible. All green waste should either be placed on the temporary compost heap where it will be bagged and subsequently removed by Guildford Borough Council. Alternatively, those working in the garden may choose to bag the waste and take it home with them for recycling.

While it is the intention to remove as much of the green waste from the temporary compost heap as possible, it is clear that some waste will remain. This will provide a home for fungi, bacteria and invertebrates which in turn become food for frogs, toads, slowworms, grass snakes and birds. Grass snakes as well as hedgehogs may overwinter in the heap because of the warmth. Thus, a suitable and sensitive place needs to be identified for its location.

Different areas of the churchyard will be managed in different ways, with areas set aside specifically for wildlife conservation marked. We will employ different mowing régimes throughout the churchyard. By having areas with varying lengths of grass we hope to create a range of habitats so attracting a greater variety of wildflowers and wildlife to the churchyard. Our initial intentions will be to create the following management régimes, but in the light of experience these may change.

Figure 2: Churchyard Management Plan



1. The areas marked with (A) are those which will be regularly mowed throughout the growing season. These are the areas that will be regularly cut by Guildford Borough Council. This will give the churchyard a well-tended appearance. Bulbs are planted in this area and the grass around those bulbs will be allowed to grow.
2. The areas marked (B) will be under long grass for much of the year. This will provide shelter, food and overwintering sites for invertebrates and other small animals. To prevent scrub invasion and to maintain the grass species, these slopes will be divided into two sections, e.g., the east and south slopes, and the north and west slopes. A different section will be cut in the autumn of each year in rotation and the rest left uncut.
3. The top of the mound (C) will be managed as a Summer Meadow and so will be cut to a height of about 8cms every 3 weeks through Spring until the end of May and then left unmown until August/September after which it should be cut and the mowing left on the ground for the seed to fall out. Thereafter it should be cut every three weeks until the end of October. It is hoped that this will encourage a greater diversity of wildflowers.
4. The area (D) suffers from a lack of light because of the trees. At present much of it has been taken over by alkanet and so the first stage of restoring this area is to remove the alkanet.

The intention is then to replant grass but also other groundcover such as lilies of the valley, and ferns, and at the edges plants such as euphorbia and lungwort where they can be more easily controlled. It may be possible to plant other peripheral edges of the churchyard (e.g., the west wall) with these too in order to provide colour, variation and diversity and bring a sense of unity to the churchyard.

### **The Mound**

Special mention should be made of the mound. The mound is the focal point in the churchyard and has, for some various reasons, a place in some members of the congregation's affection. It is a space that is frequently used for youth groups activities, as well as an occasional sitting area for adults. It offers a great vantage point for enjoying the churchyard and feeling close to the wildlife. While the sloping edges of the mound contain wildflowers and other flowers (e.g., narcissi) and should be protected, the top should be retained as a recreational grass area. The sides of the mound will be cut infrequently. There it should be cut regularly. It would also be beneficial if one or two mown paths are cut up the slope to the top of the mound in order to encourage access without damaging the wildflower areas.

### **The High Street Garden**

On the north side of the church, facing the High Street, there is a small garden comprising grass, shrubs, a mixture of annuals, spring bulbs and a silver birch tree. Hedging abuts the church and lines the 'North Steps' leading down to the High Street. The grass will be regularly cut by the churchyard Group. This is a relatively 'formal' garden, but every effort is made to plant shrubs which attract birds and pollinators.

### **Planting Guidelines**

#### *Trees and Shrubs*

Trees are important for birds as they provide look-out posts, nesting sites and insects for food. Saplings will be encouraged provided they are growing in appropriate places which will not potentially damage or dislodge gravestones or are growing close to the church buildings. If trees need surgery or present a risk of falling or damage the advice of Guildford Borough Council will be sought as this lies within the churchyard management agreement with Guildford BC. We will also check whether there are tree preservation orders or other regulations in case permission is needed. New planting should be carefully considered so that grassy areas are not shaded out; native trees and shrubs should be used, preferably those that grow naturally in Surrey or on a chalk subsoil; Shrubs will be grown which attract pollinators and provide a source of food, e.g., nectar or berries when other food sources may be scarce or used up.

#### *Headstones and areas around headstones and the base of trees*

These are important sites for lichens and mosses and will vary according to the type of stone, its age, and the effects of weathering. These should be left untouched as far as possible as they do not harm the stone and may reduce erosion by protecting against acid rain. Lichens and mosses are generally not a feature of the headstones in the churchyard. Headstones will be left in their original positions where possible, but where they present a potential hazard, they will be moved and positioned in such a way that removes the hazard and is also respectful to the memories of those departed. A major survey of all the headstones and the inscriptions was undertaken in 1891 by Philip Palmer, and updated in 1999/2000 in a project led by Maureen Wright (Appendices 2).

The grass should not be cut too close to the base of headstones and trees. An area of longer growth around these prevents damage to them and to the cutting equipment and maintains the stability of headstones as well as giving shelter to small animals.

### *Boundary Walls and Stonework*

The west side of the churchyard is bounded by an approximately 8-foot-high stone wall. Much of this wall is covered with Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*). The RHS encourages those that do grow it to take great care managing it and with disposing of unwanted material. The Virginia Creeper present all along this wall has done serious damage to the wall and has been responsible for dislodging headstones. It has recently been severely cut back, and it is the intention to keep it under control and where possible remove it and replant with shrubs that are more in keeping with the objectives of the Management Plan.

### *Birds and Bats*

There are six substantial trees in the churchyard and nest boxes have been installed on two of them. The nest boxes were installed more than five years ago. In addition, a swift box has been installed on the north facing wall of the tower in 2017. As the churchyard is a place of calm and restoration, this is enhanced by bird activity and bird song. A full bat survey was undertaken in 2017/8 and Pipistrelle bats were identified in the churchyard trees, but not in the church.

### *Insects*

Plants will be grown that encourage insects. Insects will also be encouraged through the building of bug hotels.

### *Use of chemicals*

Fertilisers, insecticides, herbicides (weed killers) will not be used as they are mostly non-selective and are toxic to all wildlife. The quality of the soil in the High Street 'garden' is extremely poor and is poor in those parts of the churchyard where shrubs are grown. Mulch, compost and well-rotted manure will be used in these areas to improve the structure and fertility of the soil.

### **References and Useful Resources**

- 'Eco Church. 'The Importance of Grassland and Mowing Regimes', and 'Creating a Management Plan', <https://ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk>
- Caring for God's Acre, 'Churchyard and Burial Ground Action Pack' <https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/resources/action-pack/>
- Framfield Churchyard Management Plan <https://www.framfieldchurch.org.uk/>
- Holy Trinity Church, Guildford: Graveyard Survey 1999 – 2000 <http://www.holytrinityguildford.org.uk/Buildings/Churchyard>
- Norfolk Wildlife Trust Caring for Grasslands: Grasslands in churchyards (ND) [www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)
- Thomas Ford & Partners, Heritage Statement (2019)
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Living Churchyard Project: Churchyard Management Booklet (ND) [www.ywt.org.uk](http://www.ywt.org.uk)

### **Acknowledgements**

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David Uzzell  
on behalf of the Holy Trinity Eco Group  
2021

**Appendix 1:****Wildlife Survey 2021****Birds**

Blackbird  
 Blue Tit  
 Carrion Crow  
 Collared Doves  
 Dunnock  
 Goldfinch  
 Great Tit  
 House Sparrow  
 Jackdaw  
 Magpie  
 Pied Wagtail  
 Robin  
 Rock Pigeon  
 Starling  
 Woodpigeon

**Mammals**

Grey Squirrel  
 Pipistrelle bat

**Trees**

Ash  
 Box  
 Holly  
 Oak  
 Silver Birch  
 Sycamore

**Wildflowers (incl  
 naturalised)**

Alkanet, green  
 Bluebell  
 Bluebell, Spanish

Bramble  
 Buttercup, creeping  
 Catsear  
 Celandine, greater  
 Cleavers  
 Common Nettle  
 Corydalis, yellow  
 Cow Parsley  
 Cranesbill, dovesfoot  
 Cranesbill, shining  
 Creeping Buttercup  
 Creeping Cinquefoil  
 Daisy  
 Dandelion  
 Dead-nettle, Red  
 Dead-nettle, White  
 Dock, broad leaved  
 Forget-me-not  
 Groundsel  
 Herb Bennet  
 Herb Robert  
 Ivy-leaved Speedwell  
 Lords-and-ladies  
 Lungwort  
 Mallow, common\*  
 Nettle, stinging  
 Parsley, cow  
 Petty Spurge  
 Plantain, greater  
 Primrose  
 Ragwort, common  
 Red Dead-nettle  
 Russian Comfrey  
 Shining Cranesbill

Smooth Sow-thistle  
 Speedwell, ivy-leaved  
 Spurge, petty  
 Sweet Violet  
 Thistle, \*creeping  
 Violet, common dog  
 Violet, sweet  
 Yellow Corydalis

**Garden plants**

Allium sp  
 Box  
 Crocus  
 Daffodil (various)  
 Dogwood  
 Euonymus  
 Geranium sp  
 Grape Hyacinth  
 Holly  
 Pansy  
 Penstemon  
 Photinia  
 Primula  
 Rosemary  
 Sage  
 Sedum sp  
 Snowdrop  
 Thyme  
 Tulip  
 Yew

Appendix 2

Churchyard Survey Plan 1999 / 2000

