



Faculty Application to relocate War Grave at Holy Trinity Hurdsfield

1. Introduction

Holy Trinity Church has an active and lively congregation which is keen to see the growth of God's kingdom in the parish of Hurdsfield and across Macclesfield. As part of our hopes to bring growth we have developed a project to improve and develop our church site so that we have a secure foundation for creative and fruitful ministry over the next 50 years.

As we have considered this, we have developed a project called 'Building for the future' which seeks to address three areas of our church life to enable and promote the growth of God's kingdom. The three areas are:

- investing in our facilities – we are currently developing plans for a new building to replace and enhance the facilities currently provided by the church office and classroom portacabins. Our current office and classroom only have temporary permission from Cheshire East and the DAC which run out at the end of 2020 and 2021 respectively. This new building will be the subject of a separate faculty which we are currently preparing.
- investing in our site – in order to ensure that people are safe on our site we need to improve our roadways and footpaths. Along with some improved lighting and signage as well as some redecoration of the lobby and coffee lounge in the church, we propose to resurface all the roadways, to increase the parking areas, and improve access to the church.
- investing in people – we believe that to encourage growth we need to put in people resources to develop new ministries and encourage the faith in existing and new members. To ensure that we do not miss the opportunities that the project presents we are planning on looking to fund a new missional ministry post for 2 years to resource this growth.

This faculty is associated with the second aspect above, investing in our site. We have submitted a separate application, 'Faculty application report for resurfacing works and improvements' to the DAC which details the work we are hoping to do. This faculty addresses one specific part of the works, the new pedestrian walkway on the south side of the church. To enable us to install this new walkway we need to relocate the war grave that is currently located at the east end of where we would like this path to go. This faculty requests permission to relocate this war grave to allow space for this new pedestrian walkway.

2. The war grave - background

We are privileged to have the war grave for Private W. Ryder (4/80369) of the Welsh Regiment in our grounds at Holy Trinity Church, Hurdsfield (Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Ref: CEM06959, Hurdsfield (Holy Trinity). See image in Appendix 1.

As the picture in Appendix 2 shows, the war grave headstone stands alone on the corner of a grassed area. Originally this grassed area was used for burials and the whole area was covered in headstones. In the 1986 all the headstones were removed from this grassed area and were relocated to form a walkway round the edge of the grassed area (note: no remains were exhumed as part of

this work). However, at this time Private Ryder's headstone was not relocated, resulting in it now standing alone on the very edge of this grassed area.

3. Why do we need to move the headstone?

In recent years, as we have seen more people attending our church, both on a Sunday as well as during the week, I and the Parochial Church Council have become increasingly concerned about the position of this lone headstone. It presents several issues including: safety for vehicle and pedestrian access to the church; potential for injury for people, especially our children and youth, who use this area for football, outdoor activities and games as well as barbeque's and picnics in the summer; and also the potential for damage to the headstone itself due to its exposed position.

As a result of our concerns we have carried out a formal review of the position of the headstone. This review concluded the following:

- its current position presents a narrow restriction to the main access route to the church entrance. This affects cars, our church minibus which we use on a regular basis for the older members of our community, as well as emergency service vehicles should they need to gain access to the building. (Image 3 shows the restricted space as our minibus is using this main access route).
- there is a significant risk to pedestrians, who share this same access route to get from our car parking areas to the main entrance of the church as well as our church office. Due to the restriction presented by the headstone, there is not enough room for both cars and pedestrians to pass by.
- there is a significant potential for damage to the headstone from vehicles as they pass by as well as general damage as it is in a very exposed position. Indeed, it was noted that the stone has some evidence of damage to the top of the stone.
- the headstone presents a risk to our children and young people as they are using the grassed area.

Taking all the above into consideration the PCC have determined that, in order to allow safe access to the church, we need to widen this access route and add a footpath alongside the roadway. This work is included in the main faculty proposal.

In order to provide a safe and sensible routing for this path, we are requesting permission to reposition the headstone (we do not propose to exhume any remains) to a nearby location. This would both alleviate the concerns we have regarding vehicle and pedestrian safety but also create an enhanced focal point for the headstone itself and in turn for our annual act of Remembrance when it is our tradition to gather beside the headstone.

4. Proposed new location of the head stone

Appendices 4a, b, and c show the current and proposed location for the new pathway and headstone. The new location for the headstone not only gives it a prominent position, being at the top of the main entrance driveway, but also a much safer location in terms of potential damage. Most importantly, it allows us to install the pathway along the south side on the church which will allow safe passage of pedestrians on a dedicated pathway separate to the roadway.

5. Position of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)

During the first half of 2018 I had a series of consultations with Andy Knowlson of the CWGC to discuss whether they would support the relocation of the headstone. This included a site visit in

which we had a very positive discussion, understanding the problem that the current location presents and agreeing that our proposed location would make a real difference to the safe operation of our site.

Unfortunately, following this meeting, the CWGC responded to say that they would not support our request. I asked him for some further understanding of this decision, and he replied saying that their primary aim was to keep headstones in the same place. He suggested that we create a path that goes round the current headstone position with kerbing and gravel infill to protect the headstone. The emails from the CWGC are included in appendix 5.

We have looked at the option that they proposed and appendix 6 shows a possible rerouting of the path around the headstone if it is not relocated. However, we have examined this option and consulted with several people (including members of the congregation, users of the church during the week as well as a retired highways engineer) and we are concerned that

- if we route the path round the headstone most, if not everyone, will leave the carpark, walk along the roadway and then, more than likely continue along the roadway only joining the path if a vehicle comes along the roadway.
- it does not address the risk it presents to our children and young people as they use that area of grass.
- the extra kerbing and gravel that they propose would increase the risk of injury and introduce further trip hazards to those using the grass area.

We were very disappointed by the response from the CWGC but it appears that they are not willing to reconsider. We understand that the CWGC's primary concern is to maintain the position of all headstones. This means therefore that we are asking the DAC to support our application for the relocation of the war grave without the support of the CWGC. We believe that, if one takes a holistic view of our vision to grow the kingdom of God in Hurdsfield, our desire to encourage the long term viability and safety of our site, the issues that the current position of the headstone presents and the risks we are trying to manage as a PCC, that there is an overriding case for its relocation.

6. Conclusion

We believe the proposed new location for the headstone will:

- be safer
- allow the PCC to manage the risk on our site better
- offers a more fitting location that will give prominence to the headstone, rather than it standing alone and looking out of place
- improve the overall welcome for everyone who uses our church site

Therefore we trust that the DAC will look kindly on this request as we seek to enhance and prosper both the mission of our growing church, as well as remember those who sacrificed much for our freedom.

James Gibson
Vicar, Holy Trinity Church
Hurdsfield

10 January 2020

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Private W Ryder Headstone



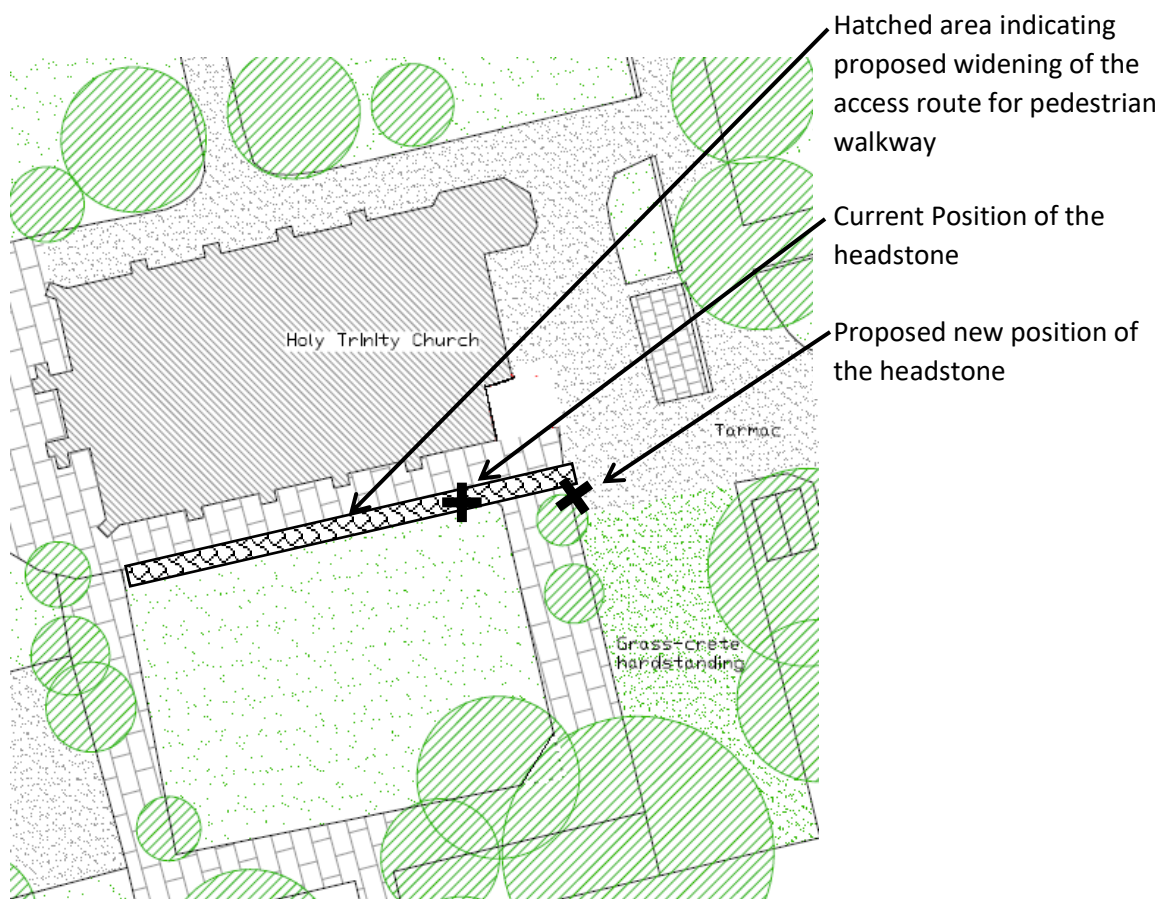
Appendix 2: Photo showing position of Headstone standing alone in corner of grassed area



Appendix 3: Photos showing narrow restriction presented by the current position of the headstone



Appendix 4a: Plan showing current and proposed location for the headstone and the area to be used to widen the access route to provide safe pedestrian access



Appendix 4b: the current position of the headstone

- note the risk presented to pedestrians due to having to share the roadway with vehicle and the limited width of roadway presented by the position of the headstone.



Appendix 4c: the proposed new position of the headstone

- the headstone will be moved to the end of the boundary hedge giving it a prominent and well protected position.
- the remains will be left in their current location with the possibility of a plaque being placed in the pathway to mark the old position of the headstone.
- note: the current position of the headstone is included for reference.



Appendix 5 – Copy of emails containing responses from Andy Knowlson of the CWGC.

From: Andy Knowlson [<mailto:andy.knowlson@cwgc.org>]

Sent: 10 April 2018 09:38

To: James GIBSON

Subject: Hurdsfield (Holy Trinity) Churchyard - War grave of Private W Ryder

Dear James,

Following my visit and meeting with you as regards the request to relocate the headstone of Private W Ryder, I have discussed this with my managers and wish to inform you that our position is that the headstone should remain in its current position.

- As discussed during our meeting if the proposed footpath were to be installed alongside the existing kerbing and then run round the headstone of Private W Ryder, then we would wish to install kerbing with gravel infill to give protection to the grave.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions

Kind regards

Andy

From: James GIBSON [<mailto:james@hthmacc.com>]

Sent: 31 May 2018 11:39

To: Andy Knowlson <andy.knowlson@cwgc.org>

Cc: james@hthmacc.com

Subject: RE: Hurdsfield (Holy Trinity) Churchyard - War grave of Private W Ryder

Dear Andy,

I am disappointed about your decision regarding the headstone. Following our meeting, I was hopeful that the relocation of the headstone to the adjacent location we discussed, presented a mutually beneficial solution both for us as we seek to make sure our site is safe for its users and your desire to maintain headstones close to their original position.

I would be grateful if you could detail for me how you have arrived at your position. The current location of the headstone continues to present us with a significant health and safety issue as we use the site and so I would like to be able to give some explanation as to how and why you have reached your position to my PCC.

If you could explain how you have considered our application and weighed up the issues that we face as an active worshipping congregation wanting to use our site as fully and safely as possible, and concluded that they are overridden by the benefit of leaving the headstone in its current location which is, as you did agree when on site, somewhat of an anomaly now that all the other headstones have been removed from the area.

Thanks very much for your help in this and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

James

From: Andy Knowlson [<mailto:andy.knowlson@cwgc.org>]

Sent: Mon 02/07/2018 10:38

To: James GIBSON

Subject: Hurdsfield (Holy Trinity) Churchyard - War grave of Private W Ryder

Dear James,

Please find below further detail as regards our decision

As discussed during our meeting the Commonwealth War Graves Commission priority/responsibility is that the point of burial remains the point of commemoration.

Unless we cannot maintain the grave of Private Ryder in its current location or if there is an overriding public necessity we would not support exhumation or agree to re-locating of the headstone of Private Ryder whilst leaving the remains in situ.

As your request was to re-locate the headstone so as to allow safer access for pedestrians, we feel that to avoid traffic (pedestrians and vehicles) going over the grave, that the best option to improve safety without affecting the grave would be for the pavement to be installed with a dog leg around the grave area. This however would be a decision for yourselves.

Kind regards

Andy

Andy Knowlson

Regional Manager, West

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

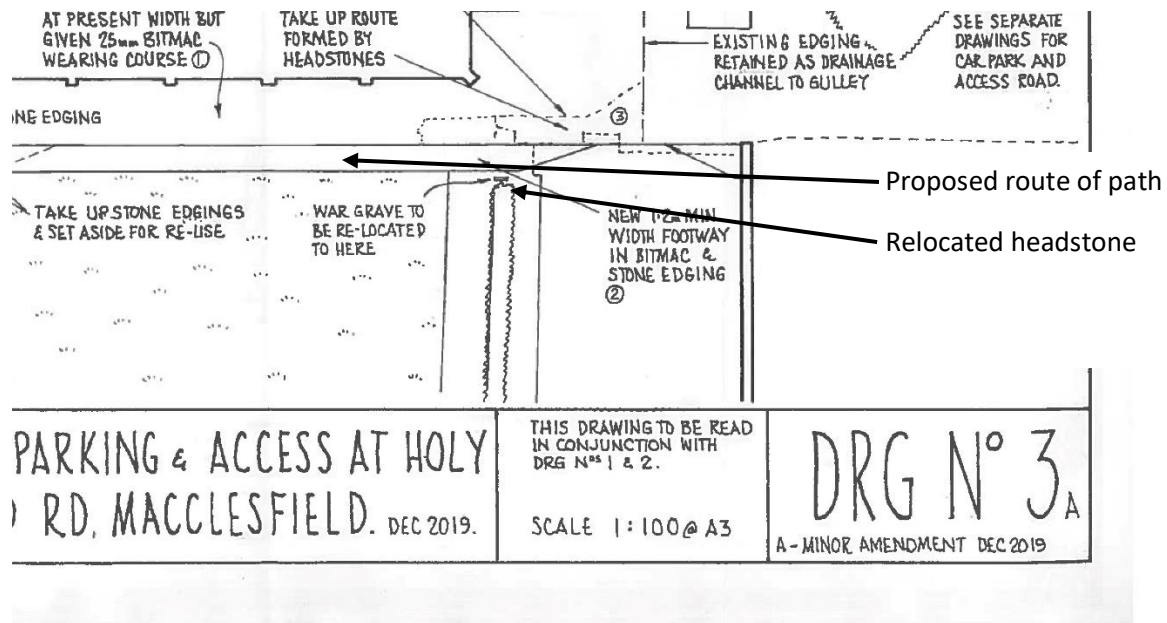
2 Marlow Road Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 7DX, United Kingdom

Mobile: +44 7917 791837 | Website: www.cwgc.org



Appendix 6 – Plans showing proposed and alternative route for pathway in the vicinity of the war grave headstone.

Appendix 6a – plan showing proposed route with relocation of the headstone



Appendix 6b – plan showing alternative route suggested by the CWGC around the existing site of the headstone

