

# A GUIDE TO BURIALS & CEMETERIES



A brief guide to the  
cemetery services offered  
by Witney Town Council



**WITNEY**  
TOWN COUNCIL



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# Introduction

The cemeteries in Witney are a special part of the town. We have a dedicated team to look after our cemeteries and the people who use them. Our office staff can help explain the processes around burials, exclusive rights of burial (EROB), memorials and maintenance. We have a Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer to support the wildlife and a maintenance team who take great pride in ensuring the grounds and plots are well looked after and presented.

Discussing burial plots because you are making an end of life choice or simply thinking ahead so your loved ones won't have too can often leave you feeling overwhelmed. We have put together this short booklet to introduce you to our cemeteries and the services we offer. We hope we have covered most of the basic information here but if you would like further details or clarification on any of the points raised or if there is anything else we can help with please do get in touch. Alternatively you can find more detailed information in our Cemetery Regulations on our website.



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# Burials

We manage two cemeteries in Witney, Tower Hill and Windrush. In most cases, burials in our cemeteries will be managed by your chosen funeral director. They will contact us directly to book the interment and use of the cemetery. We will endeavor to accommodate the preferred date of burial for your loved one. We may have to offer your funeral director an alternative date if we have a pre existing funeral booking.

We can offer access to the cemeteries for burials from Monday to Friday. To ensure a safe environment for our cemetery staff we operate on seasonal working times.

- From November to March, services can start between 11am and 2pm.
- From April to October the start times are 11am to 3pm and 11am to 2pm on Fridays.

As the cemeteries are not lit, this allows enough daylight hours for our staff to complete their work once your loved ones service has finished.

If you would like to organise an ashes interment without using a funeral director, we would ask that you fill in one of our interment booking forms. You will also need to provide a copy the cremation certificate.

If you or your family don't already own the EROB (exclusive right of burial) to a plot we can help you with the purchase. For more information and help with the process please contact us and we will be happy to help.

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# Tower Hill Cemetery

Tower Hill is a lawn cemetery and has been serving the people of Witney since 1857. Unfortunately there are no more plots available to purchase for new coffin burials however we do have a limited number of family ashes plots available. We can also offer the Rose Scattering Bed to scatter your loved ones ashes.

There is pedestrian access to the cemetery 24 hours a day via the pedestrian gates via Tower Hill, Curbridge Road and path at the rear of The Rowing Machine public house. The gates allowing vehicle access to the small car park are open between 9am and 3pm Monday to Friday. The vehicle gates will also be open Christmas Eve to New Years Eve (inc), Good Friday through to Easter Monday (inc) and Friday pm to Monday am on the weekends of Father's Day and Mothering Sunday. In addition, we will also lower the bollards that give vehicle access to other parts of the cemetery on these special holidays. If you are planning a visit outside of these dates and would like to request the bollards be lowered please contact the office, giving 24 hours notice and we will be happy to arrange this for you whenever possible.

During funerals, only attendees will be given access to the cemetery and car park to allow family and friends to grieve and say goodbye to their loved one in private.

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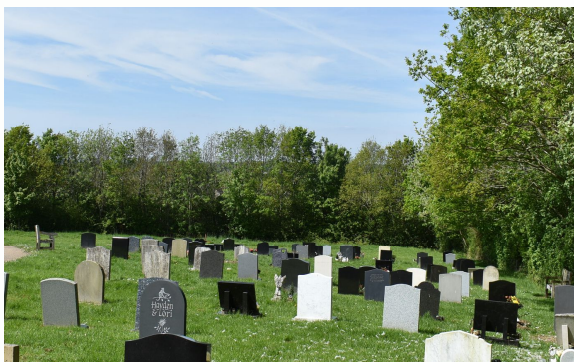


# Windrush Cemetery

The Windrush Cemetery opened in 2004 with beautiful views over Witney and the surrounding countryside. This cemetery can accommodate double depth burials, single depth Muslim burials, natural burials in our meadow and woodland areas. There is an ashes path designated for cremation interments. A special area is reserved for young people and infants and there are benches and seats overlooking the valley providing a serene and picturesque area for quiet contemplation.

The cemetery is permanently open to the public with a car park near the entrance. There is no public vehicle access inside the cemetery. The only vehicles permitted inside the cemetery are those carrying out maintenance or the funeral cortege. Unfortunately, we cannot allow public vehicle access inside the cemetery during funerals.

During funerals, only attendees will be given access to the cemetery and car park to allow family and friends to grieve and say goodbye to their loved one in private.







# Plot Types

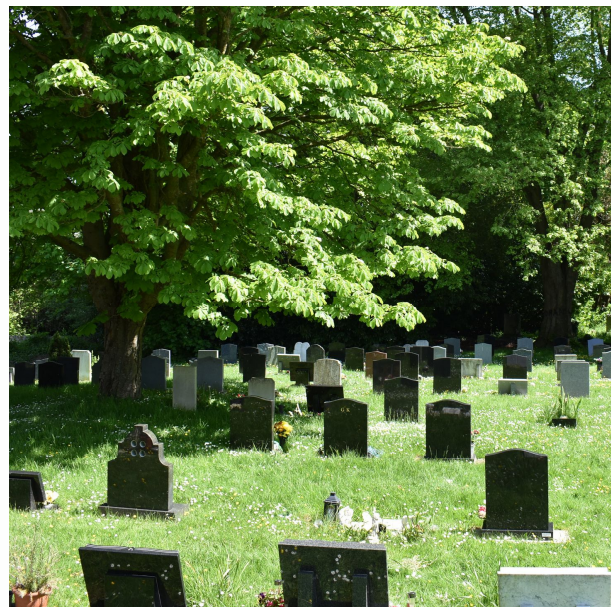
We offer several different plot types in our cemeteries. The EROB for these can be purchased directly from Witney Town Council or through your funeral director. If you would like further details on any of these plots please contact our office staff or visit our website.

## Tower Hill Cemetery

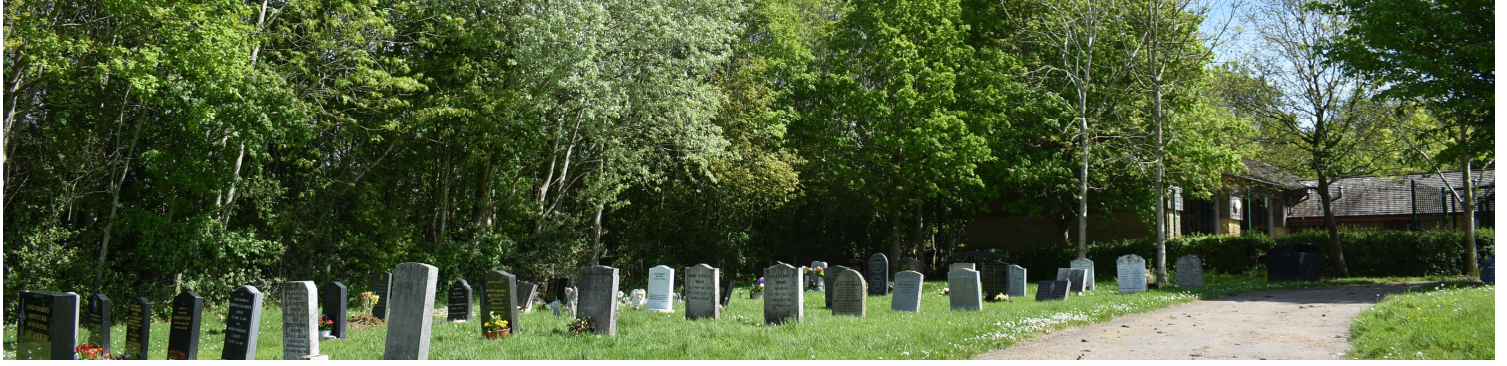
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**Family Ashes** - These plots are lawn plots with space for 6 sets of ashes.

**Rose Scattering Bed** - This is a beautiful area of the cemetery where you can scatter your loved ones ashes with no purchase fee (EROB). To book a time to scatter ashes please contact our office.







# Plot Types

## Windrush Cemetery

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**Double Depth Lawn Burial** - These plots allow for 2 coffin burials. Once these spaces have been used there will be room for an additional 6 sets of ashes at the top level.

**Children Section** - There is a section in the cemetery set aside for children and babies. These plots have space for a coffin burial and 2 future ashes interments.

**Single Depth Woodland & Meadow Burial** - These plots allow for a more natural burial. They are unmarked and the area covered with informal drifts of wild flowers, grasses & trees. The planting of these is managed by Witney Town Council and not used to identify individual plots. These plots are not available to purchase or reserve as they are single depth burials with no headstones. To remember a loved one interred in these sections we have plaques available to purchase that we can engrave and placed on our dedicated tree guards.

**Muslim Plots** - These plots are orientated in accordance with religious beliefs and are at single depth.

**Ashes Path** - This is a paved section near the entrance of the cemetery. These plots are smaller than lawn plots and have room for 2 ashes caskets.

**Scattering Bed** - This is a beautiful area of the cemetery where you can scatter your loved ones ashes with no purchase fee (EROB). To book a time to scatter ashes please contact our office.

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# EROB

## Exclusive Right of Burial

EROB - Exclusive Right of Burial (historically referred to as a Deed).

This document gives the bearer the right to be interred in the named plot, grants permission for future interments and is required to apply for a memorial to be installed. When the EROB fixed term ends we will contact the bearer to give them the opportunity to repurchase the EROB. If it is not repurchased the plot will revert back to Witney Town Council ownership and may be reused in the future.

The bearer can transfer ownership of the EROB at anytime to anyone of their choosing. This can be done by requesting a form from the town office. Once the bearer has been interred, the EROB will need to be transferred to allow friends or family members to apply for a memorial and to give permission for future burials or interments. This is a straight forward process but will require some supporting documents such as a Will, probate or a statutory declaration. Please contact our office team if you would like to discuss this further or would like support with your application. Alternatively, you can seek advice from your funeral director.

Only the EROB holder can apply for additional interments and memorials. It is worth noting that if there is more than one person named on the EROB they will all have to sign any applications before they can be actioned.

Application forms and more information on any of these points can be found in our Cemetery Regulations or by contacting the town office.

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# Example EROB

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## WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

### GRANT OF EXCLUSIVE RIGHT OF BURIAL NO

BY VIRTUE of the power conferred by the Local Government Act 1972 and by Orders made by the Secretary of State under Section 214 thereof, and by the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order of 1974 and 1977, to Grant Exclusive Rights of Burial,

WE, Witney Town Council, for the Town of WITNEY, in the County of Oxfordshire, in consideration of the sum of : paid to us on  
2024 by :

DO HEREBY GRANT unto the said the exclusive Right of Burial in the Grave Space numbered WR/G/ in Section G of the Burial Ground situated at Windrush Cemetery aforesaid, being part of the Burial Ground provided by the Town Council.

TO HOLD the same to the said for the purpose of Burial only for a period of THIRTY years from the date hereof, subject to any Regulations or Bye-laws now in force.

IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED that the transaction hereby effected does not form any part of a larger transaction or a series of transactions in respect of which the amount or value, or the aggregate amount or value, of the consideration exceeds ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS ONLY.

GIVEN under my hand as the duly appointed Officer of the above Town Council, this TWELFTH day of FEBRUARY TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY FOUR.

Signed.....

Town Clerk

#### NOTE :

This Grant is subject to the provisions of any Order made under Section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972. A copy of any such Order currently in force may be inspected at all reasonable times at the offices of Witney Town Council.





# Memorials

When you're ready to start looking for a memorial for your loved ones plot you will need to contact a memorial mason. In some cases your funeral director can also manage this for you. The mason or funeral director will ask you if you are the EROB holder as they are the only ones permitted to apply for a memorial. If the EROB holder has passed, please seek advice from your funeral director, memorial mason or contact our office and we will guide you through the next steps and help you to transfer the EROB..

There are a number of memorial styles permitted in our cemeteries. We also have an approved size guide for memorials which can be found on our website. Tablet memorials can only be installed on our ashes path and can be placed immediately following the interment. Headstone style memorials on our lawn plots can be installed 1 year after a burial. This is to allow for the ground to settle ensuring the structural safety of your memorial. During this 12 month period a small, plain, wooden cross can be staked into the ground to mark your loved ones plot. This should be no bigger than 10cm wide and 25cm tall. The maintenance team will need to remove the cross when it is time to seed the plot. The cross will be kept safe by our team until you you are able to collect it.

We do also offer the option of having a permanent Wooden Cross.

Once you have confirmed your design and wording with the mason, they will contact us to request a permit for the work to take place.

On some occasions we may need to temporarily remove headstones to gain access to reserved plots to prepare for burials. We will contact you to make sure you are aware. This work will be carried out by a stone mason. Please ensure you update us with any change of contact details so we can get in touch if we need to.

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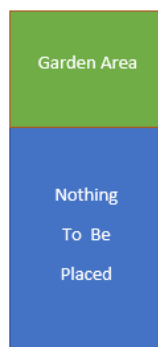


# Plot Maintenance

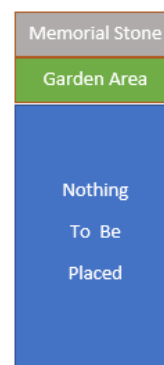
After the burial of your loved one we will maintain a 20cm mound of soil on the plot for 1 year to help the ground to settle. We would ask that during this time nothing is planted on the plot. Anything planted, wreaths or cut flowers will be moved to the head of the grave by the cemetery team so they can carry out the required maintenance. The lawn plots are seeded twice a year with a specific grass mix. We would ask that you do not spread grass seed yourself please. If you would like to know the schedule of this maintenance please contact the office and we will be happy to go through this with you.

Lawn burial plots allow for a small garden at the head of the grave. If you install a headstone, the garden area will be 90cm wide and 45cm long. If you choose not to install a headstone the garden area will be 90cm wide and 90cm long. We ask that the remaining area of the plot is left clear so we can maintain the cemetery. Any plants or decorations outside of the garden area along with any glass will be moved to either the head of the grave or stored until you are able to collect them. More information on permitted planting or decorating of your loved ones plot can be found in our Cemetery Regulations or by contacting the office.

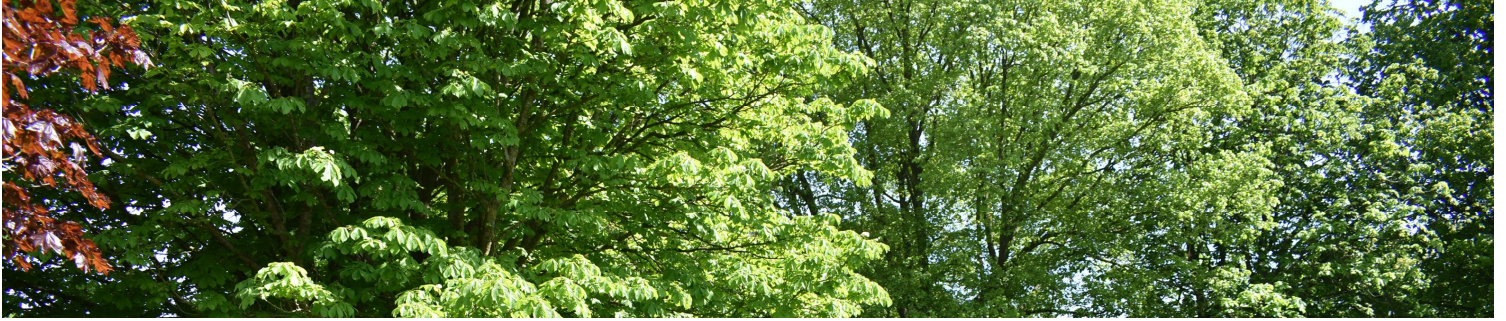
No Memorial Stone in Place  
Maximum Garden Area 90cm Wide x 90cm long



Memorial Stone in Place  
Maximum Garden Area 90cm Wide x 45cm long







# Remembering A Loved One

After special occasions such as Christmas, Mothers & Fathers day, anniversaries & birthdays our maintenance team will clear flowers, wreaths and seasonal decorations. We will advise you via posters at the cemetery entrances and on our notice boards well in advance of the date for this planned work. If you would like to keep any of these items please ensure you take them home before the stated date.

There are many different ways to remember a loved one. In addition to traditional Memorial stones, plaques, benches or trees, We have installed Post Boxes to heaven. This was the idea of a 10 year old girl from Nottinghamshire who wanted to write to her grandparents after they had passed. It has proven to be something that has brought great comfort to many relatives and we were very happy to introduce them to both our Witney Cemeteries.





# General Maintenance

We take great pride in maintaining the cemeteries to a high standard and hope you find them a peaceful place to remember your loved one. As well as looking after the lawns we also assess and maintain the trees and shrubs regularly.

Our team use machinery and vehicles when carrying out maintenance and preparing plots for burials. Unfortunately, especially during the winter months, this can occasionally leave track marks on the lawn. Every care is taken to avoid this but if you have any concerns please do contact us and we will be happy to talk through the planned works to rectify any damage that may have been caused.

There is an abundance of wildlife in our cemeteries, particularly in Tower Hill Cemetery. You will very often spot birds and squirrels along with the occasional hedgehog. Our Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer will visit the cemeteries occasionally to check on their wellbeing. As owls have been noted in Tower Hill, we have installed nesting boxes. We would ask that you do not feed the wildlife in our cemeteries. If you are concerned about their welfare please contact us and will be happy to make an assessment. To protect the wildlife and their habitat it is also very important to keep your dog on a lead and clean up any mess.

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This cemetery was extended into this area after extensions in 1890 and 1936

There are 6 First World War Commonwealth War Graves in the cemetery for: Pte Harry Churchill, Pte James Cox, 2nd Lt Charles M Doolittle, Cadet SX Miles Pte A Townsend and 2nd Lt Bryan Lawson

There are 5 Second World War Commonwealth Graves

One of the most interesting memorials in the cemetery is that of the Roberts family of Caswell Farm, Curbridge which is of a full church with spire.

Most of the Victorians who built modern Witney are buried in the lower section of the cemetery. The oldest recorded person to be buried was a Robert Taylor in 1904 who was listed as 98. The names of Early, Marriott, Collier appear frequently, many of whom roads and landmarks are named after today.

There are many curious memorials and symbols that can be found in Victorian cemeteries across the country. Look out for them at Tower Hill. They include:

Anchor and chain- firm faith and salvation

Broken column - cut off in the prime of life

Clasped hands - hope of meeting again, farewell

IHS - abbreviation of the word Jesus in Greek

Obelisk - ancient Egyptian symbol for life and health.



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# A guide to Tower Hill Cemetery



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## The Wishing Tree

The tree, it is claimed, can grant wishes and in times gone by the custom was for children to embrace the trunk and make a wish when they were in trouble or really needed something.

The un-consecrated chapel or 'The Chapel for the performance of the Burial Service by persons not being a member of the United Church of England and Ireland' was built by James Long along with the boundary walls, entrance piers, and pillar gates.

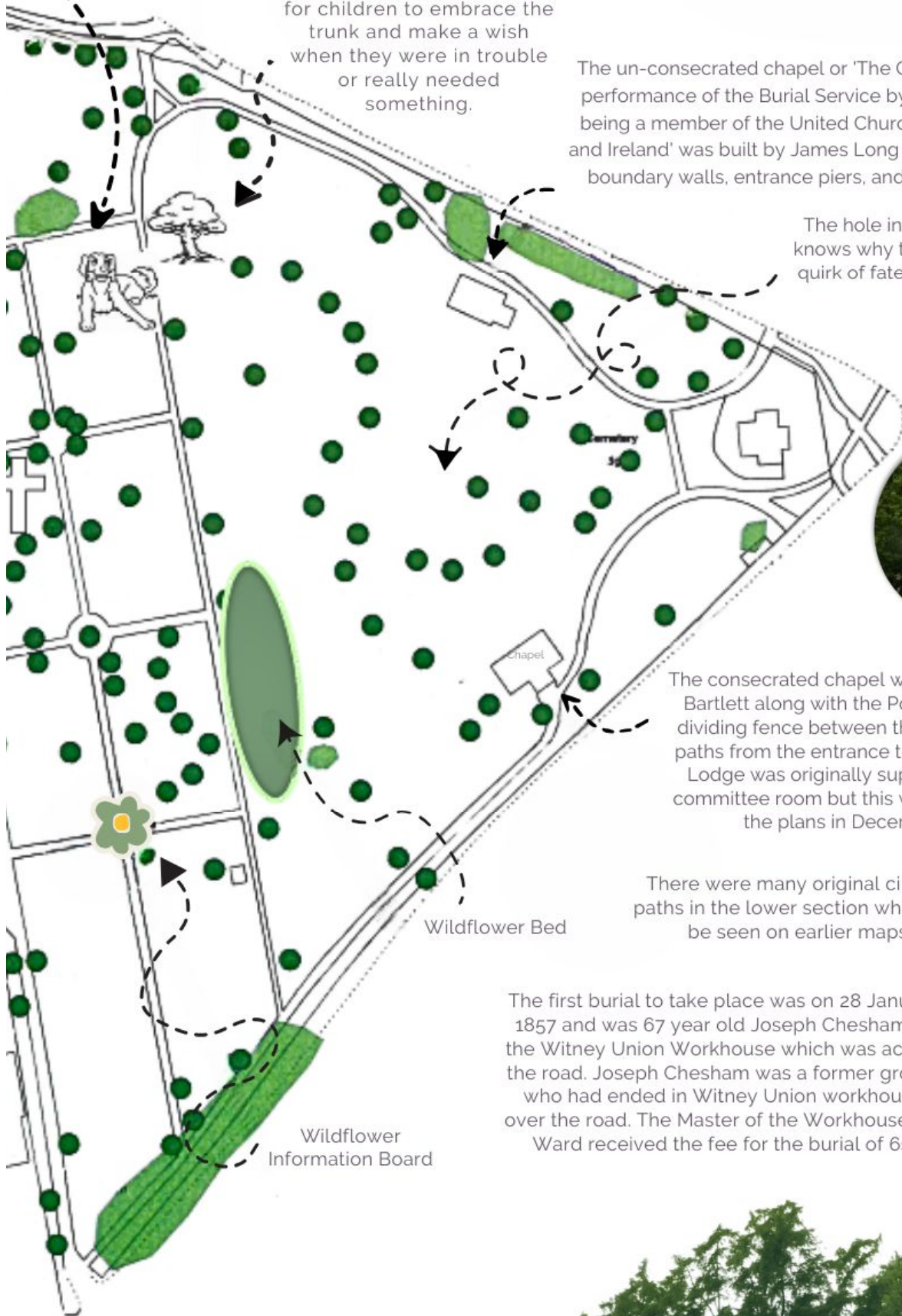
The hole in the hedge - no-one knows why this is here, perhaps a quirk of fate or planned planting.



The consecrated chapel was built by Malachi Bartlett along with the Porter's Lodge, the dividing fence between the 2 areas and the paths from the entrance to the chapels. The Lodge was originally supposed to have a committee room but this was removed from the plans in December 1856.

There were many original circular paths in the lower section which can be seen on earlier maps.

The first burial to take place was on 28 January 1857 and was 67 year old Joseph Chesham of the Witney Union Workhouse which was across the road. Joseph Chesham was a former grocer who had ended in Witney Union workhouse over the road. The Master of the Workhouse Mr. Ward received the fee for the burial of 6s.





# A guide to Windrush Cemetery

The Windrush Cemetery opened in 2004 with beautiful views over Witney and the surrounding countryside. This cemetery can accommodate double depth burials, single depth Muslim burials and natural burials in our meadow and woodland areas. There is an ashes path designated for cremation interments. A special area is reserved for young people and infants. There are benches and seats overlooking the valley providing a serene and picturesque area for quiet contemplation.



An archaeological evaluation was carried out on the site to ensure it was suitable to be used as a cemetery. During this assessment, evidence of Iron Age and Medieval activity was found, along with small shards of Roman pottery.









**WITNEY**  
TOWN COUNCIL

# Further Assistance

## **Anti Social Behaviour**

Unfortunately, cemeteries occasionally experience anti social behaviour. A few examples of anti social behaviour are theft of grave items, threatening behaviour or drug misuse. As we are unable to monitor the cemeteries 24 hours a day, please help us to keep them safe by reporting any of this type of behaviour to the police on 101.

## **Further Questions?**

If you would like further information on any points we have covered or if there is anything else we can help with please contact us on 01993 704379 or [facilities@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:facilities@witney-tc.gov.uk).

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