

Dear Joanna,

You have asked me to give an updated view on the outstanding costs for completion of the Cemetery Data project.

I believe we have made good progress since getting the go-ahead on this initiative, just over a year ago. I found it impossible at that time to give an accurate assessment of what we were facing, the depths to which we would need to delve, in order to establish an accurate and complete picture and how long it might all take (and therefore its cost).

However, I do believe we can now be more specific about what's still necessary and hopefully give your Council a firmer idea of remaining costs and time.

Section A

As you know, we really only have Section A left to do - which has been kept to the end on purpose, due to the unique challenges presented in that area. Our recent surveying of the Section, has not only confirmed those fears, but suggests the problems may even be greater than we first thought.

Nevertheless, I suggest that as Section H was also a tricky exercise, it could be seen as a comparable activity. Around 50 hours were billed in connection with Section H and I am currently expecting Section A to take a roughly similar time.

Digitisation of historical documentation

A significant amount of historical Cemetery documentation is unavailable. All Burial Grants prior to WWII are gone, as are the Grants from 1963-1983. Chronological Interment details after 2002 are largely missing, all plot maps of the site prior to the Harvey Map are lost and (logically) there must have been a list of which plots had been reserved, or purchased and for whom, which is also missing - its absence has almost certainly led to much of the historic spreadsheet inaccuracy and plot-occupancy errors.

Anyway, the digitization of all remaining historical documents to ensure nothing else gets lost is vital and this activity has already begun (starting with the 300 handwritten Burial Grants that remain available).

Digitisations still outstanding include:

1. Two Ledgers of Interments in **chronological order**, containing details from 1897 to 2002: 310 pages.
2. Two Ledgers of Interments in **plot order**, covering Sections A to L (M onwards do not appear to have been done): 119 pages.
3. Two very useful notebooks are available, one covered red and one brown (mixed authors) containing lots of corroborating and sometimes contradictory evidence regarding names and plot numbers: Red (Plot-based), 45 pages; Brown (chronological 1973-2011), 70 pages.

4. The Clerk also holds seven, Lever Arch Files, each containing between 70 and 100 separate folders in alphabetic order of the proposed, or current plot occupant, containing the *Notices of Burial* along with additional data on personnel, plots, stonemasonry, burial activities, changes and all associated correspondence.

It is estimated that items 1 thru' 3 detailed above, will need around 544 images storing, naming and cataloging and presuming 3 minutes per image, this is likely to take at least 27 hours.

The digitization of item 4, the Lever Arch Files, is perhaps even more important, due to it still needing to be referenced as family members continue to be interred. If just 50% of all held documents are digitized, stored and catalogued (others having been identified by the Clerk as being of no particular interest, historical value, or usefulness), an estimate of 40 hours might not be far wrong.

All of the above documents will be converted directly into a digital image and stored in Dropbox. At which point, the original Primary Source can be stored securely, safely and permanently off-site.

Clickable Files

The project solution, relies on being able to access every facet of information from a central point – these will be known as the Clickable Files and will be accessed for viewing and amendment via a single click from the Spreadsheet.

Although a fundamental part of the project, they're only simple WORD documents, but contain, in a standard format, all the information and images that have been collected on the occupants of a Plot. This will include, but not be limited to, official purchase documents, photographs of headstones and plaques, terracotta kerbing, headstones and sculptures (some listed), family correspondence, stonemasonry, burial issues, disputes and damages.

110 of these files (Sections D, E, F and G) were completed some time ago, to establish the standard format (but will still need the Lever Arch file documentation to be added), with about 950 files still needing to be created and populated with data and images. In the absence of any particular problems (hopefully these have all been worked through already), a rough estimate of about 8 minutes for each one would lead to about 120 hours.

Training

It was always intended that the Clerk would take over the management and editing of the Visio-based Cemetery Map. As a result, there will be a need for a certain amount of training. This can be acquired via external courses, or I'd be happy to offer it, or the Clerk could spend some hours getting used to how Visio works by trial and error.

Alternatively, I would consider being retained by Compton Council to keep the Cemetery Visio Map updated under strict instruction of the Clerk.

Remaining Cost and Time Estimate

Given the above calculations, I would expect the completion of Section A and the remaining digitization activities, to be done over the next 2 months and cost around £3,500

The vital work of creating the remaining Clickable Files should be completed before the end of August (also costing about £3,500), bringing the project to a conclusion.

I must of course say these are only estimates, based on my experience of the cemetery so far.

The Clerk's training, or my retained, ad-hoc Visio assistance beyond August (should it be required), would be in addition to the above.

Cost Reduction Opportunities

Without wishing to sound trite, or predictable, I feel I have made every possible attempt to completely avoid unimportant activities, or (more usually) to just not make a charge for them.

I have enjoyed the work so far and often done far more investigatory work than was justifiable, in order to reach the most accurate and complete picture of what's in place. I recognize that this was for my own satisfaction in completing the job as best I could, so please rest assured that I have not billed for such work.

Consequently, I'm unable to suggest any cost savings that wouldn't (in my view) have a significant and detrimental effect on this incredibly necessary (and, one has to say, overdue) project.

The Cemetery is a wonderful, historic and culturally important place, of real significance for Compton and I'm very aware that this is recognized by the Parish Council (hence my involvement).

Multiple unsuccessful attempts have been made over the years to get the Cemetery properly surveyed, decoded, understood, corrected, drawn and documented... I think we're now very close to that goal.

I hope the above has been helpful. If there is anything in particular that needs further clarification, or further detailed analysis, do let me know.

David Herbert

May 2025