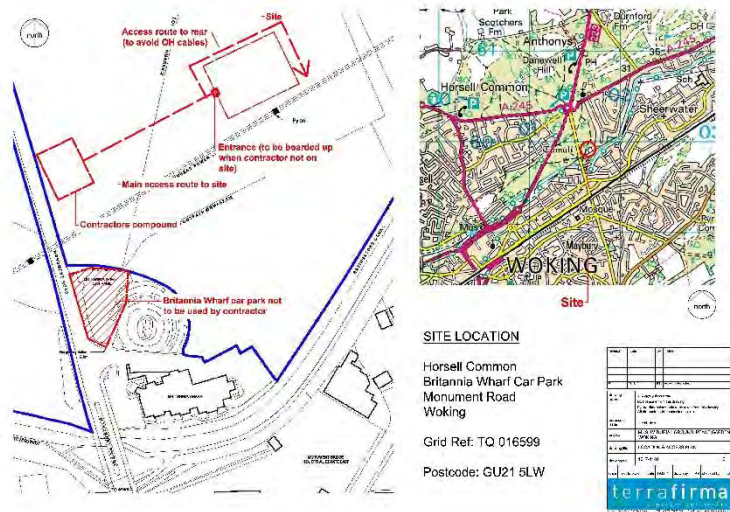


## The Muslim War Cemetery Peace Garden Horsell Common, Woking

The site has a fascinating history and, together with the nearby Shah Jahan Mosque, is the oldest in the country. Built in 1889 by an extraordinary Jew, Dr Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, the site sets a shining example of bringing together different faiths and cultures within the country.



The Burial Ground was founded in 1917 as a last resting place for Allied Muslim soldiers who died of their wounds in this country during WW1, and later supplemented with further burials in WW2, bringing the total numbers of graves to 27.

In 1969, following some regrettable vandalism, the graves were transferred to the nearby Brookwood Military Cemetery.

For many years the Horsell Common Preservation Society, who had by then taken over the site, tried without success to raise fund to renovate and protect this important monument. In 2012, mindful of the centenary commemorations of the commencement of the Great War, English Heritage offered to fund 80% of the cost of repairs to the boundary wall structure and the Chattri (entrance). In response, Woking Borough Council agreed to meet the balance so the project could be completed and in the autumn of 2013, renovation experts Universal Stone Ltd commenced repairs to the brickwork and Portland stone capping under the guidance of architects Radley House Partnership.

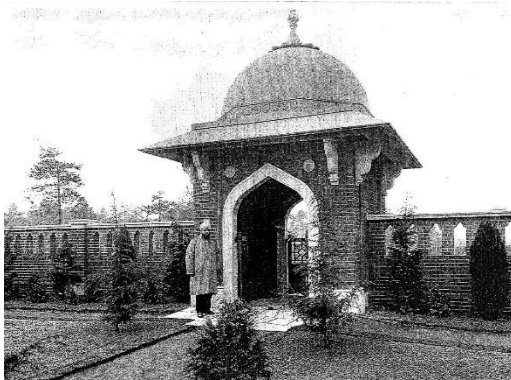
The terra firma Consultancy became involved as designers for the garden within the site, with a loose brief to conceive a special place of remembrance celebrating the vast, and vitally important, contribution made to the Allied war effort by armies of the Indian sub-continent.

In doing so, this could be a timely reminder of togetherness in today's mixed culture in Britain.





## Site History



## Newspaper Clipping (Source: Surrey Advertiser – 2 August 2013)

2 August 2013 Surrey Advertiser 17

# Our Woking

## Muslim cemetery to be restored in time for First World War centenary

1917 cemetery created as final resting place for Indian Army soldiers who died in the Great War

by Joe Finnerty

WORK has started on the project to restore the Muslim Burial Ground to its former glory in time for the centenary of the First World War.

The burial ground on Horsell Common, off Monument Road, was established in 1917 and is undergoing renovation work so it can be used as a garden of peace and remembrance.

It will also act as a future heritage site for those living in or visiting Woking.

The project is being run by English Heritage, the Horsell Common Preservation Society and Woking Borough Council.

Paul Stamper, senior design adviser at English Heritage, said: "The Woking Muslim Burial Ground was established in 1917 to meet soldiers of the Indian Army who died in south coast war hospitals.

"Its architectural interest, and unique status as a site of memory for Muslims who died fighting for Britain in two world wars, is recognised in its national designation as a Grade II listed structure.

"English Heritage is pleased to have been able to support the work of Woking Borough Council and the Horsell Common Preservation Society to ensure that the fabric of this important war memorial, in a conservation area, is repaired in preparation for the centenary commemorations of the First World War.

The project seeks to restore the structure to its original state to encourage visits and provide a place for acts of commemoration.

It will also promote Woking as a historical venue for tourists and the first phase of work, which are anticipated for completion in November 2013, will include reinstating the boundary walls, restoring the Chattri to its original state and removing some trees to open up the surrounding area.

David Robbins, chairman of Horsell Common Preservation Society, said: "We are delighted that this part of the common's heritage is being repaired with the generous help of English Heritage and Woking Borough Council.

"I hope Woking will be proud of this unique war memorial when the work is finished.

"We also hope that our shared vision of planting a memorial garden within the walls will come to fruition with everyone's support."

More than a million troops from India, including what is now Pakistan, fought for Great Britain in the First World War.

There were casualties for Hindu and Sikh soldiers but no dedicated burial ground for Muslims.

German propaganda suggested Muslim soldiers were not being buried in a respectful way in accordance with their religion.

It was decided to create the burial ground in Woking because it was home to the only purpose-built mosque in Britain at the time.

The burial ground was completed in 1917, by which time it had received 17 burials - each marked with round arched headstones facing west, in accordance with Islamic tradition.

A Sandhurst cadet was buried there in 1920 and the War Graves Commission took over the burial ground's upkeep in 1921.

A further eight Muslim soldiers were buried there during or shortly after the Second World War.

In 1968, due to vandalism, all the burials were removed to Brookwood Cemetery and the ground deconsecrated.

Councillor John Kingsbury, leader of Woking Borough Council, said: "It really is an exciting time to see the Muslim Burial Ground being restored to its original state.

"It is an important heritage site, not only locally but also for the descendants of those who gave their lives in the First World War.

"Woking is a multicultural borough and by working in partnership with English Heritage and Horsell Common Preservation Society, it has managed to build on to a future heritage site."

Work is hoped to be completed in time for the First World War centenary. Elizabeth Cattle (trustee of the Horsell Common Preservation Society), David Robbins (chairman of HCPSP), Paul Stamper (senior design adviser for English Heritage), Zafar Iqbal (project lead and Woking BC's senior policy officer) and Cllr Gary Eason (Woking BC's portfolio holder for promoting the local economy) looking at the architect's plans.

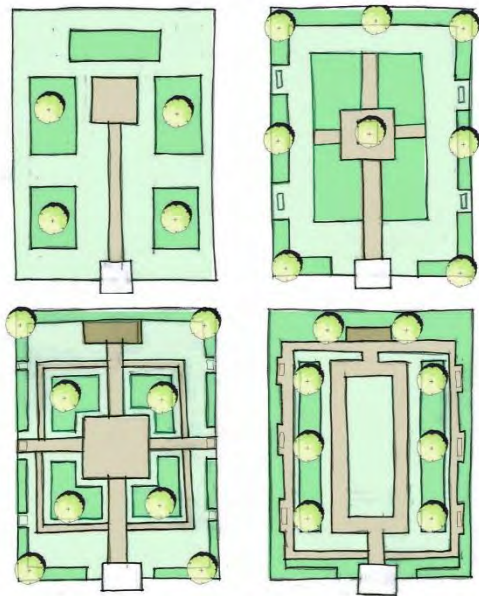
Pictures: Grahame Luster (Ref: WK134821\_7)

It is hoped work should be complete by November.



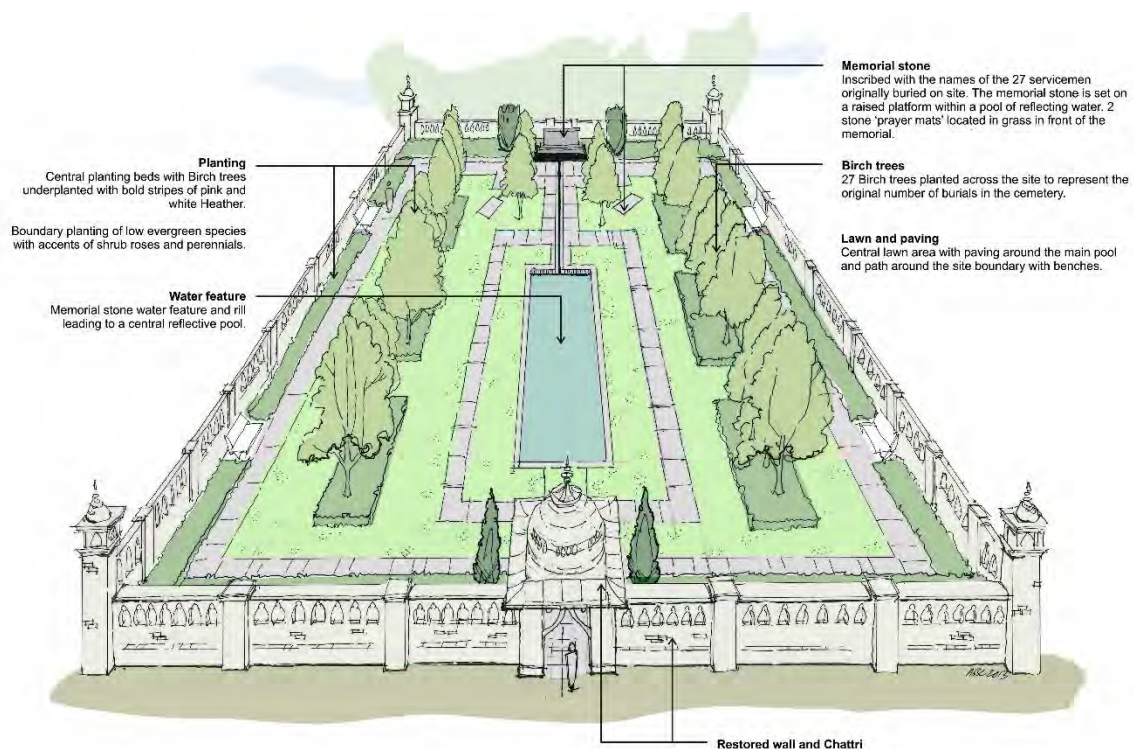
The garden brings together the cultural expression of a traditional Islamic garden with the natural elements of the Common. A formal geometry is set up from the walls, around a central waterbody fed by a rill and a small waterfall from an upper-pool, upon which an up-lit monolithic memorial stone with all the names of the fallen engraved seemingly floats as the garden's focus.

Paths of Indian sandstone lead around the garden while plantings beds of Birch and Heather provide seasonal colour and spatial definition.



Outer boundaries include evergreen and deciduous plantings in simple swathes, kept low so not to detract from the listed walls but with sentinel columnar plantings at opposite ends, either side of the Chattri and the memorial stone.

The design is under-laid with symbolism; with one tree for each soldier originally buried in the grounds; the use of Portland stone within Indian granite on the memorial; the Irish yew of the English churchyard which were also in the original planting; Birch tree varieties that originated on the Indian subcontinent; the inclusion of the stone prayer mats orientated towards Mecca along with the strips of differing Heather species within the beds; and the calming sight and sound of gently moving water.







In November 2015 we were proud to attend the opening ceremony of the garden by HRH the Earl of Wessex. Some of you may have seen the BBC One programme 'Britain's Muslim Soldiers' early in the New Year, which followed the progress of the project through the eyes of its two main instigators, Dr Zafar Iqbal, Woking Borough Council, and Elizabeth Cuttle, Horsell Common Preservation Society, and commemorates the vast and vitally important contribution made to the Allied war effort by the armies of the Indian subcontinent.





Our designs for the garden found funding through numerous sources following the energetic efforts of Zafar, Elizabeth, and their respective organisations. Following competitive tender, the contract to build the garden was won by landscape contractor LDC with water feature specialists Fountains Direct, with work being implemented from November 2014 to June 2015.



Engagement with the local community came both with the approvals from the Shah Jahan Mosque and community stakeholders to early design sketches, but also with physical assistance from local schoolchildren and the Army, including Muslim representatives, who assisted with planting operations.

It is hoped that the garden is already becoming a focus for the community and, in some way, represents a meeting of cultures while also engaging visitors with the locality and its natural elements.

As with any garden, maintenance was always going to be an issue and the inclusion of a mown lawn and formal water body, with recirculating pumps, means regular attention is required, however these were central to the sense of place and philosophy of what was to be achieved in both form and function.

Otherwise, the layout, minimal use of lighting, and the provision of site power and water all assist ease of maintenance operations where possible. The hard materials are robust and the planting kept simple and appropriate to the site's soils, which were not replaced nor heavily ameliorated.



## Scheme details:

Complete client and project team:

**Client:** Woking Borough Council (Zafar Iqbal)

with Horsell Common Preservation Society (Elizabeth Cuttle, Paul Rimmer)

**Landscape Architect and Project Manager:** The terra firma Consultancy (Lionel Fanshawe and Paul Strugnell)

**Consultant Engineer:** Hockley & Dawson (Doug Murray),  
with Woking Borough Council (Nigel Miller)

**CDM:** Radley House (Neil Pritchard) and Jeremy Poll (Architect for the separate wall repairs)

**Contractor:** LDC (Nigel Prince, Keith Hamilton and Sally Hanham)

**Subcontractor Water Specialist:** Fountains Direct (Paul Everdell)

**Site information:** Refurbishment of historic site with new memorial garden

**Size of site:** 31 x 43 metres (1,333 m<sup>2</sup>)

**Date of practical completion for scheme:** July 14<sup>th</sup> 2015

**Date of end of defects for scheme:** July 14<sup>th</sup> 2016

**Brief:** To produce a design for a new garden to sit within the refurbished walls of the original memorial; work with the clients and community to develop this; assist fundraising and then manage the tender and implementation process (under JCLI contract)

**Budget:** Undetermined at commencement, but final value £187,532.89

**Contract/programme/phasing details:** Design – 2013-14; Tender – June to August 2014;  
Contract Works – December 2014 to July 2016

**Site visits:** Site is open to public

















