

21 November 2023

Tēnā koutou katoa / Greetings to you all

Thank you for your patience as we gathered the latest information for this progress update.

We are well and truly into the [‘Doing The Work’ phase of our Queenstown Cemetery Restoration!](#) The Mike Hurring (MHL) contracting team have spent two weeks in the cemetery delicately excavating the grave features from debris and the space became a ‘sea of white bags’ for a while there.



*Over 700 tonnes of soil has been loaded into bags by the MHL team, most of it by hand (above)*

We'd like to emphasise the care and consideration the MHL team have shown during this process. The majority of these bags were filled by hand using shovels and rakes, which helps ensure that as many displaced grave goods are reclaimed as possible. All grave items found were tagged and are stored safely to hopefully be reclaimed once the debris removal is complete.

The planning and preparation that was carried out prior to works starting ensured the contractors knew exactly what features to expect underneath the sediment when excavating. It also guided what areas needed to be hand dug and where smaller diggers could safely assist, along with accurately capturing all grave items collected and anticipating where headstones may have been displaced. This means the cemetery has been able to be cleared quite quickly but also carefully and efficiently, which is the outcome we were aiming for.



*Lower stone wall prior to excavation (above)*



*Lower stone wall and ash beam following excavation (above)*

The 'sea of white bags' has not lasted long! Last Friday (17 November), a 160-tonne crane arrived on Brecon St to start lifting the bags into trucks to be transported off site. The bags have all been marked according to the zone in the cemetery they came from and will be temporarily stored in case any grave items are not accounted for.



*Crane lifting the bags off site with Zone 1 of the cemetery now mostly clear (above)*

The excellent news is that all headstones are accounted for, with only three displaced (i.e., moved) from their beam location, and another four slightly tipped and just needing to be tilted back upright. The Brecon St entrance to the cemetery was also uncovered just as the crane arrived. Please note that this entrance currently remains closed to the public.



*Cemetery entrance along Brecon St is now clear (above)*

While we are progressing closer to having the cemetery open once again, work to clear the logs at the top of the cemetery is still taking place. Those that can be removed via the cemetery reserve are expected to take another week or two. Logs that cannot be safely removed via the cemetery will be wire transported back up the hill and removed via Ben Lomond Reserve. Due to the hazard that this work still presents to the cemetery reserve below, we will be working with our contractors to arrange a suitable schedule for when the cemetery might safely be opened to the public.



*Logs being removed from above cemetery and stones gathered to repair historic wall (above)*

We will also be in touch about scheduling a ‘community headstone cleaning’ day as we know many families and community members are keen to be a part of this important step in the cemetery’s restoration process. Our final step in the process will be a more formal opening ceremony with date and time still to be determined.



*Zone 2 being cleared just this morning, 21 Nov (above)*

Our sincere thanks to the entire Mike Hurring Logging and Contracting crew who have been working tirelessly for the past two weeks to gently clear the cemetery spaces of debris. Thank you to you all as well for your continued kindness, patience, and support as we have worked through this complex and delicate restoration process.

As always, if anyone has questions or concerns, I am just an email or phone call away so please get in touch anytime!

Ngā mihi nui / thank you so much!