

MANAGEMENT OF MEMORIALS IN GREAT BARFORD GRAVEYARD

1. INTRODUCTION

Great Barford Parish Council (the Council) manages and maintains the graveyard and closed churchyard in Great Barford, both of which include memorials.

For the purpose of this policy the closed churchyard and graveyard will be referred to jointly as the 'graveyard'.

The Council has a duty of care to take practicable and reasonable steps to ensure that the graveyard is a safe places for visitors and staff.

Memorials require periodic inspection to ensure they remain safe and identify any maintenance requirements. The Council implement a combination of proactive and reactive systems to manage the safety of the graveyard.

The Council recognises burial ground management is extremely sensitive and must be undertaken in a manner that is both proportionate to the risk and sensitive to the feelings of bereaved families.

The Ministry of Justice has introduced guidance, *Managing the Safety of Burial Ground Memorials*. The Council's guidelines seek to adopt this guidance and the management of memorial safety within its graveyard.

The Council will adopt a two stage approach by implementing a sensitive, risk based procedure to safeguard existing memorials and by ensuring all future memorials are installed to nationally recognised standards.

2. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Council has a legal requirement under the following legislation to ensure that graveyard is a safe place for visitors and staff without presenting undue risk to their health and safety:

- Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 (LACO)
- Occupiers Liability Acts 1957 and 1984
- Confined Spaces Regulations 1997
- Manual Handling Operation Regulations 1992
- Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996

These place obligations on the Council to ensure risk is effectively managed to acceptable levels.

A monumental mason is required to undertake work in accordance with the Council's conditions and specifications for memorials as set out by the National Association of Memorial Masons, and in accordance to British Standard BS 8415.

The Deed Holder, or successor in title, of a memorial has the ultimate responsibility to maintain it so as not to present a hazard to themselves, members of the public or Council staff, and as such are responsible and liable for all expenditure incurred to make safe their memorial in the event it is found to be unsafe or dangerous.

To meet our obligations the Council will put in place:

- A system of identifying risks and necessary controls as outlined in this document
- A system for implementing these controls and ensuring that they are effective
- Making people who are affected by these risks aware of what the issues are and what they need to do for their health and safety and the safety of others
- Ensuring that accurate records are maintained.

3. INSPECTION PROGRAMME

Risk assessment

A risk assessment provides a focus on those hazards with the potential to cause harm to visitors and Council staff. Risk is the combination of the likelihood of a hazardous event occurring and the consequence of that event. A risk assessment will be completed by members of the Graveyard Committee and/or Council staff

Inspection will primarily focus on memorials considered most likely to present the greatest risk, as well as their design, style and environmental factors. The following scope of inspections takes this in to account:

- Each section of the graveyard will be assessed to identify areas of high, medium and low risk. Memorials alongside or within a short distance of paths are more likely to present a risk to visitors than those which are less accessible. Less frequented areas may attract antisocial behaviour or may need greater maintenance as relatives are no longer tending memorials. Memorials situated on sloping or uneven ground may present an increased risk.
- Multi-part memorials, which depend on bonding of their parts for stability, can present a greater risk where the joint has failed. Some memorials might also be made of material which more readily erodes and becomes unsafe. Consideration should be taken that the risk of joint failure is absent in monolithic monuments, and memorials with a broad base are less likely to fall than those with a relatively narrow base.
- More recent memorials should be designed to British Standard BS 8415 (*Monuments within graveyard and memorial sites - Specification*), and the construction, dowels and fixings should be in accordance with the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) *Code of Working Practice*. Memorials installed to these practices have greater assurance of good stability.

- Regular inspections will assist in building up a profile of the memorials in the graveyard. This will provide a focus on future priorities for the inspection and assessment process.

Inspection of memorials

Visual inspection will be undertaken in assessing the stability of a memorial and to identify:

- Damaged or eroded bonding.
- Movement of parts of a memorial from its original position.
- Kerb stones breaking apart.
- Undermined or unstable foundations.
- Leaning memorials – particularly if there is evidence of recent movement.
- Evidence of structural damage or disturbance (e.g. cracks).
- The presence of vegetation, which may cause cracks etc. to widen.

A photographic record of each memorial, regardless of the condition, will be taken and catalogued to correspond with each inspection record.

Where a memorial shows visible signs of damage or defects, such as joint or component failure, a hand test should be used to determine stability of the memorial. Where memorials have no sign of defects, a hand test should still be undertaken to confirm that the memorial is stable.

The hand test will be carried out by standing to one side of the memorial and applying a firm but steady pressure in different directions to determine if or to what degree the memorial is unstable.

It should be noted that the assessor should not test a newly installed memorial for at least 28 days from placement to allow for the curing of any jointing material.

If the assessor is satisfied that the memorial passes the hand test and the memorial is leaning from the vertical then the angle of inclination should be measured. This should be noted together with the date and the information retained for monitoring purposes.

If some instability is detected following the hand test a judgment must be made as to whether this movement is limited or whether there is sufficient movement for the memorial to present a high risk to people's health and safety.

Memorials installed in recent years on independent foundations are fitted with a ground support system. These memorials may move, even rock if the base to foundation joint is broken, but do so within designed tolerance limits and represent no danger as the memorial will lock on the ground anchor. The Council will however still contact the grave owner to inform them of the movement.

Larger, heavier memorials, such as older columns or obelisk types, initially require a visual check as stated above. These inspections should be recorded and, where this judgment is not so clear, the assessor may need to consult a specialist engineer or memorial mason for advice.

The Council will not undertake a mechanical test. Should the assessor be unsure of the memorial stability then the assessor may need to consult a specialist engineer or memorial mason for advice.

Kerbstones and the associated bridging material i.e. concrete or stone pads shall be inspected since there may be a trip hazard if the kerb has fallen from the grave space. The condition of the inner bridge part should be inspected since there may be voids because of below ground subsidence which may cause the bridging material i.e. stone or concrete to collapse when a weight is applied. Kerbs may be integral with and support the headstone and therefore this may be another indication that the headstone memorial part may be unsafe.

	Full visual inspection	Hand test	Professional opinion
Memorials up to 500mm	√ <input type="checkbox"/>	√ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Memorials 500mm to 1.5m	√ <input type="checkbox"/>	√ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Memorials 1.5m to 2.5m	√ <input type="checkbox"/>	√ <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Memorials over 2.5m and complex structures	√ <input type="checkbox"/>	X <input type="checkbox"/>	√ <input type="checkbox"/>

Frequency

The frequency of inspection will be determined by the Council as part of their assessment and ongoing review procedures. It is possible to vary inspection frequency based on age, size and condition of the memorial and actions detailed in each inspection record. To reduce risks and eliminate the potential for errors or omissions every memorial will at least receive an inspection every five years.

Deciding on Precautions

Inspection will be recorded as set out at Appendix C, along with identified actions. Each inspection will be classified to assist the assessor formulate an action plan:

Priority	Risk	Action
1	Dangerous and likely to fall over requiring immediate attention	Memorials cordoned off using hazard markers and where practicable laid down within five working days
2	Unstable but unlikely to cause immediate danger needs monitoring (re-inspect within 12 months)	Notification to families of the bereaved will be through a letter to the executor of the grave asking that they notify the Council of their future intentions to organise a repair through a memorial mason. In the event of no reply, within 14 days, the Council will assume that the executor has moved from the last known address and secure a notice (in a plastic cover) on the memorial asking that the family contact a named person. The notice shall be in place for 30 days before a further risk assessment is undertaken to establish whether, if left unattended, the memorial may constitute a significant higher risk, such as imminent collapse in a way that could lead to serious injury. Where the risk has increased, following no remedial action, then the headstone may be made safe. This would normally result in the dismantling of the memorial and laying it flat on the grave space.
3	Re-inspect within 5 years in accordance with inspection schedule	Memorials subject to re-inspection as part of a five-year rolling programme.

Modern lawn type memorials present a low level of risk due to their design, size and method of fixing. However, larger and older memorials may present a greater risk through instability requiring more immediate steps to reduce the risk to visitors and Council staff (e.g. restricting access, cordoning off or laying the memorial flat).

Where a temporary cordon is to be positioned around a memorial, the area to be fenced will need to cover a 1 metre swathe further than the potential fall zone of the memorial.

The Council recognises the potential for upset and distress this may cause to bereaved families, as well as the potential impact on appearance of the graveyard. In all cases where temporary measures have been taken to make memorials safe, steps to effect a permanent repair or resolve will be taken as soon as reasonably practicable.

Employee Awareness guidelines

All Council employees who undertake works in the graveyard shall be issued with general guidelines outlined in Appendix E to facilitate their reporting of memorials which are believed may be unstable.

Communication prior to inspections

The sensitivities of the memorial inspection process and the management of the outcomes from it mean good communications are a vital consideration. Prior to inspections taking place the Council will place notices in the graveyard informing of the safety programme with contact details for those requiring further information. The notices will be sited on prominent entrance areas and within the notice boards provided. (see Appendix A)

In the case of closed churchyards, the Reverend of the Parish or Secretary to the Parochial Church Council should be contacted so that they are made aware and can communicate this to their congregation.

Communication with the public

Ownership of memorials rests with family of the deceased and for this reason communicating with memorial owners, the bereaved and the wider community as part of the arrangements for managing memorials, is considered important.

Where memorials are found to require maintenance, every effort will be made to contact the family of graves in which the last burial took place within the last 40 years. Only when the memorial poses a significant risk, such as imminent collapse in a way that could lead to serious injury, will immediate action be taken to reduce the risk.

The Council will not seek to notify the family of graves where memorials are found to require maintenance and in which the last burial took place over 40 years ago, unless there is clear evidence that the grave is still visited.

A standard letter will be used – Appendix B

Other relevant controls

All memorial erections should comply with the NAMM (National Association of Memorial Masons) approved standards. This includes installation of ground anchor systems to secure the base of the memorial, and stainless steel dowels to secure bases of the memorials to headstone sections. This method of memorial installation is to ensure all new memorials are safe and secure. The Council shall require a signed declaration from Monumental Masons (the installer) to demonstrate installations conform to the NAMM Standards.

The issue of a right to erect a memorial is controlled under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order, 1977. The Council grants permission to erect a memorial.

Record Keeping /Action Plans

Inspection records will be clear and unambiguous; for example; it should note any prioritisation; a record of those memorials that were judged high risk of collapse and precautions taken/planned to mitigate identified risk; also, the timescale for when the assessment/inspection process will be repeated.

The Council will maintain records (Appendices C and D) identifying:

- Proper checks were carried out
- Those who might be affected were identified.
- Significant risks will be dealt with, taking account of the number of people who might be exposed, and the likelihood of the risk.
- Any precautions are proportionate, and the remaining risk is acceptable.

4. REFERENCES

This procedure reflects guidance set out in the following:

- **Managing the Safety of Burial Ground Memorials**

Practical advice for dealing with unstable memorials
Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

- **Code of Safe Working Practice for Cemeteries**

Institute of Burial and Cremations Administration (IBCA)

- **Code of Working Practice**

National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM)

- **Management of Memorials**

Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM)

Appendix A

NOTICES

General safety notice

IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTICE

Memorials in this graveyard may be unsafe. Great Barford Parish Council will be commencing inspections in the near future.

To ensure your ongoing safety, please assist Great Barford Parish Council by keeping to the footpaths, not walking between memorials and ensuring children are supervised at all times.

Where memorials are found to be unsafe the Parish Council will take steps to make them safe.

If you would like further information, please contact the Parish Council:

59 High Street
Great Barford
MK44 3JJ

Tel – 01234 870245
E-mail – clerk@greatbarford.org.uk

Unsafe memorial notices

Memorials that are identified as unstable and cordoned off will be identified using warning notice, affixed to the memorial. The wording of the sign to be as follows:

IMPORTANT NOTICE - UNSAFE MEMORIAL

It is with regret that we must inform you that this memorial has been inspected and has been found to be unsafe. Please do not touch or interfere with it in any way. The memorial can only be repaired by an approved mason.

The memorial has been reported to the Parish Council and attempts are being made to contact the owner of the grave.

For further information please contact:
Great Barford Parish Council
Tel: 01234 870245

Where a memorial has to be laid flat then a notice will be attached on the front face of the memorial only. The wording will be as follows:

IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTICE

This memorial has been inspected and was found to be unsafe.

Please do not attempt to re-erect the memorial without the use of an approved memorial mason. This is for your own safety.

For further information please contact
Great Barford Parish Council
Tel: 01234 870245

Appendix B

Proposed letter of notification to owners of burial rights

SAFETY INSPECTIONS – Great Barford graveyard

Re: Grave Number: Surname:

Dear

According to our records you are the registered owner of the above grave at Great Barford graveyard. If the address or ownership details are incorrect please contact us to update our records.

The Parish Council has recently carried out a safety inspection of all memorials in Great Barford graveyard. Unfortunately, during the inspection the headstone on the grave in your ownership was found to be unstable. A small warning sign has been affixed to the headstone and a temporary cordon may also have been put in place.

It is the responsibility of the owner of the grave rights to ensure the memorial is maintained in a safe condition. We recommend you contact the original supplier of the memorial stone who may be willing to re-fix it at no cost to yourself under the terms of your purchase agreement.

I would be grateful if you could confirm, within the next 14 days, that you will arrange to have the memorial properly secured. This work must be carried out within six months of the date of this letter and must be carried out by a NAMM accredited stone mason.

If we do not hear from you, the Parish Council will need to make the memorial safe, which in some cases may mean laying the memorial flat.

If you would like further information or to discuss this matter please contact the Parish Council office.

Yours sincerely

Clerk to Great Barford Parish Council
59 High Street
Great Barford
MK44 3JJ

Tel – 01234 870245

E-mail – clerk@greatbarford.org.uk

Appendix D

EXAMPLE INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT FORM

Section:	Plot:	Name of deceased:	
Memorial type		Height:	
Notes on condition (visual check for cracks, chips, lean, failed joints):			
Ground conditions:	Frequently Visited: Yes / No	Adjacent to path: Yes / No	
Hand test carried out: Yes / No	Movement detected: Yes / No	Specialist advice required: Yes / No	
Action taken:			
Risk level: H / M / L	Inspection frequency based on risk assessment:		
	Low Every 5 years	Medium Every 3 years	High Every year
Inspected by:		Date:	

Assessing Risk

Hazard

- Something with the potential to cause harm

Risk

- The combination of the likelihood of a hazardous event occurring and the consequence of that event

Likelihood

- Probable very likely to happen
- Possible may happen
- Improbable unlikely to happen

Consequence

- Major severe damage or major injury
- Moderate some damage or moderate injury
- Minor trivial damage or minor injury

		Consequence		
		1: Minor	2: Moderate	3: Major
Likelihood	3: Probable	3	6	9
	2: Possible	2	4	6
	1: Improbable	1	2	3

Evaluating Risk

- 1-2 low risk no action needed
- 3-4 medium risk monitor for any change
- 6-9 high risk take action to reduce risk

Appendix E

EMPLOYEE GUIDELINES

Employees undertake various maintenance operations in the graveyard. These duties range from general amenity operations such as mowing and hedge cutting, to undertaking the burial operations and repair of walls, paths and fences.

All employees working in the graveyard shall be aware of the required procedures and have regard for their own Health and Safety by reporting any unsafe memorial masonry or dangerous occurrences.

These guidelines are given to make employees aware of the risks involved in undertaking maintenance of these grounds.

DO's

- Always report suspected defects to memorials or dangerous occurrences immediately to your Supervisor.
- Always be vigilant where you walk. Look out for trip hazards such as brambles, holes in the ground and dislodged kerb sets.
- Always be vigilant where you place your hands. Look out for hazards such as sharp objects and broken glass vases.
- Always wear the recommended personal protective equipment.
- Always ensure that the guards are in position on all machinery.
- Always report any accident and fill in the accident book.
- Always be aware of wasps and bees nests in kerb sets and voids in the graveyard.
- Always stand clear of leaning memorials (falling area) by using the mower only beneath the memorial.
- Always maintain a safe working distance between your colleagues to prevent injury from falling masonry in the event of an accidental impact from machinery.

DONT

- Never walk across any concrete kerb set or gravel covering the grave as this may hide underground subsidence of the grave.
- Never undertake any hand testing, report all suspected defects to your Supervisor.
- Never mow around suspect dangerous memorials with ride on mowers. The vibration of the heavy machinery may cause movement.
- Never enter enclosed fencing protecting unsafe memorials to mow the grass.
- Never allow hands any part of the body or clothing to come into contact with the moving parts of machinery.
- Never use a leaking, mechanically unsound or damaged machine.
- Never smoke whilst using machinery.
- Never lift fallen masonry unless a personal manual handling assessment of the object has been undertaken.

Appendix F

Safe Systems of Work – Memorial Safety Inspections

- All memorial safety inspections will be carried out in accordance with the guidance provided by this policy and other relevant national guidelines.
- Persons carrying out safety inspections must ensure they have the correct tools, equipment and protective clothing to carry out the task.
- Inspections must not be carried out under adverse weather conditions or if temperatures fall below freezing.
- Immediately prior to carrying out the inspection of any memorial the assessor must ensure that the area around the memorial is clear of all potential hazards, for example, loose memorial components, glass jars etc. Particular care should also be taken if the ground conditions are noted as poor or uneven.
- If the memorial is overgrown with weeds/vegetation this must be removed prior to inspection. This should be done with great care to avoid damage to the memorial and possible risks to safety.
- For memorials up to 2.5 metres, inspections will include both a visual check and a hand test. The visual check must be completed first and the results recorded on the memorial risk assessment form.
- The hand test will be carried out by standing to one side of the memorial and applying a firm but steady pressure in different directions. The hand test will be used to determine if or to what degree the memorial is unstable.
- Assessors must ensure that their actions do not pose a hazard to other employees or visitors. When carrying out the hand test it is the assessor's responsibility to ensure that they and all other persons stand out of the possible fall area of the memorial.
- Assessor must be vigilant at all times and consider their actions and omissions in respect of the health and safety of all users of the graveyard.