



DITCHLING PARISH COUNCIL

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BURIAL GROUND POLICY

Introduction

This burial ground policy outlines the principles, guidelines, and procedures governing the management, use, and maintenance of Ditchling Burial Ground. We aim to ensure dignity, respect, and sustainability in the management of these sacred spaces while adhering to legal requirements and community expectations. Ditchling Parish Council is responsible for enforcing regulations, issuing permits and overseeing day to day operations.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Preserve the sanctity and integrity of burial grounds.
- Ensure respectful and dignified interments.
- Maintain safety and security within the burial grounds.
- Provide clear guidelines for the management and use of burial grounds.

Access

- The main gate is unlocked 24 hours a day for visitors to the burial ground and funeral access unless otherwise specified for maintenance or security reasons. The gate should remain closed at all times and parking on the grass verges is prohibited.
- Parking is available in the adjacent recreation ground

Visitors

- Visitors must adhere to these rules and regulations to ensure respect for the deceased and other visitors.
- Activities such as picnicking, littering, or any behavior disruptive to the solemnity of the site are prohibited.
- It is the responsibility of visitors attending the grounds to take reasonable care of both their own and other people's safety. Children should be supervised and dogs must be kept on a lead at all times.
- Dog owners are required to collect any dog mess and place in the bins provided on the recreation ground.
- Rubbish is to be placed in the bins provided.

Interments

- Interments shall be conducted in accordance with relevant laws, regulations, and religious or cultural customs.

- Only licensed funeral directors or authorised individuals shall be permitted to conduct interments.
- Proper documentation, including burial permits and consent forms, must be obtained before interment.
- The Parish Council does not supply grave digging services and these must be arranged via the licensed funeral directors. Spoils must be placed in the designated area at the rear (east) of the burial ground.
- Newly dug graves will be filled in and re-turfed where necessary once they have settled which is usually after a period of six to nine months after the date of burial. It is advisable that no memorial be placed on a new grave until it has settled and been re-turfed if required.

Monumentation and Memorials

- Installation of monuments, headstones, or other memorials must comply with size, design, and placement guidelines set by the Parish Council. See appendix 1.
- Maintenance and repair of existing monuments shall be the responsibility of the deceased's family or designated representatives and the Parish Council must be advised of any changes of addresses for those responsible persons.
- Installation of memorials must comply with the current NAMM/BRAMM code of working practice and must be carried out by a member of the Register of Qualified Memorial Fixers.
- Unauthorised alterations to memorials are strictly prohibited.
- The Parish Council reserves to itself, by the appropriate Acts entrusted to it, the right to inspect and to carry out "hands on" safety checks and to lay to the ground, any monument that is considered to be imminently dangerous.

Grave space maintenance

- Any Artificial items including flowers are not permitted. These also include but are not limited to solar lights, lights, candles, bunting, flags, statues, windchimes, pinwheels and ornaments.
- Planting of small annual bedding plants, bulbs and low growing shrubs (not exceeding 20 cms in height) on graves is permitted within the grave space (maximum area of 60 cm wide and 30 cm deep including any headstone base).
- Chippings and edging materials must not be used in order to facilitate ease of maintenance.
- The scattering of ashes on purchased graves, or anywhere else in the burial ground or surrounding recreation space is prohibited.
- The Parish Council reserves the right to remove any prohibited articles wilted flowers, overgrown shrubs or any other items that are considered neglected or dangerous.

Environmental Sustainability

- Burial practices prioritising environmental sustainability are supported, including the use of biodegradable caskets or urns and minimising the use of harmful chemicals.
- Native plantings and landscaping practices that support local ecosystems shall be encouraged.

Maintenance and Security

- Regular maintenance, including grass cutting, landscaping, and infrastructure upkeep, shall be conducted by the Parish Council to ensure the neatness and safety of burial grounds. Maintenance of Memorials, Garden of Remembrance Plaques and graves spaces are the responsibility of the deed owner and the Parish Council recommends that adequate insurance provision is obtained.
- Any damage or hazards within the burial grounds should be promptly reported to the Ditchling Parish Council for appropriate action.

Review and Revision

This policy was reviewed and adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting on 24th September 2024 and shall be periodically reviewed and revised as necessary to reflect changes in laws, regulations, or community needs.

Memorial Guidelines

- All headstones must be of monolith or ground anchor design and must comply with BS8415.
- Headstones must be made of natural stone and the maximum dimensions must not exceed 76 cm high (from ground level), 60 cm wide and 10 cm deep. (30 x 24 x 4 inches).
- A base may be included as part of the headstone and should not exceed 60 cm wide x 30 cm deep x 7.5 cm high (24 x 12 x 3 inches). One inch of the base will be below ground and resting on a plinth. All fixings are to be BS 8415 compliant. Please bear in mind that the base may take up the majority of the designated planting area in front of the headstone.
- The headstone may incorporate a vase or urn / or one free standing vase or urn for fresh flowers may be placed on the grave space. Wrapping, ribbons and wilted flowers must be removed.
- The installation of memorials must adhere to the National Association of Memorial Masons Guidelines.