



Serving the community

Blaby Parish Council

GENERAL POLICY NO.10 – CEMETERY – SAFE WORKING PRACTICE

1. The only gravediggers on the Cemetery, Mr D. Barnacle and his sons, have been instructed to follow (from 8th May 1997) the Code of Safe Working Practice for Cemeteries, issued by the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration. A copy of the Code has been lent to Mr Barnacle. The Parish Council's groundstaff take no part in the digging of any graves.
2. The Parish Council's groundstaff have been advised to keep their tetanus vaccinations up to date. (Code: 1.1.7).
3. No-one must enter an unsupported excavation (i.e. excavations below 4'0" must be shored). (Code: 5.1.5).
4. It is noted that once the funeral cortège enters the Cemetery gates it is under the jurisdiction of the Burial Authority (the Parish Council). (Code: 1.2.7).
5. Graves, whether partly dug or completed, are covered by boards, timbers or other suitable material when not being excavated or required for a funeral (Code: 3.1.21) and are left unattended. (Code: 4.1.17).
6. A grave is completely refilled after the interment and before staff/gravedigger leaves the Cemetery at the end of the day. (Code: 3.1.23).
7. When the gravedigger is digging below 4'0" (1.219 metres) in depth, a member of Parish Council staff must be present in the event of an accident. (Code: 4.1.13).
8. Any memorial which is unstable or hazardous will be reported to the Manager.
- 9. EMERGENCY REPAIRS TO COLLAPSED GRAVES** (Code: 5.4)
 - i) In the event of a soil collapse during digging, the main objective is to SAFELY repair the damage in order that the funeral may proceed.
 - ii) If the grave is a new one it may be safer to backfill the resulting hole, including the shoring, and provide a new grave. The final decision rests on the circumstances prevailing at the time.
 - iii) Where the interment is to be in an existing grave, an assessment of the time it will take to repair the damage and prepare the grave for the funeral must be made by the Manager or Admin Clerk.
 - iv) When the estimated repair time is liable to approach or exceed the estimated time of the arrival of the funeral, the funeral director must be informed of the following alternatives:-
 - a) Re-scheduling of the funeral, or
 - b) Commit the coffin at the side of the grave for burial. When repairs are finished, the burial will be completed.

This work must be completed and burial take place on the day of the funeral. The Manager and representative of the funeral director will be present until burial is completed.

The bereaved family and mourners must not be allowed to approach the grave. A minimum safe distance must be designated. This distance will depend on the amount of the collapse, but should not be less than 2 metres (6'6") from the perimeter of grave side. This is to prevent further damage and to protect members of the funeral party.

10. STABILITY OF MEMORIALS (Code: 6.0)

Attention is given to the stability of memorials on graves surrounding a re-opening of an existing grave. If the stability of any memorial is in doubt, work to the grave will cease until the Manager has viewed the situation. The memorial may:-

a) Be removed to a safe place by Parish Council staff, to be replaced after interment.

b) A memorial which presents a hazard but is too heavy or difficult to remove by Parish Council staff will be moved by a stonemason.

11. UNSTABLE MEMORIALS (Code: 6.2)

A memorial remains the property of the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial and it is that person's responsibility to ensure the memorial is safely erected.

Where memorials are found to be unstable, they will be

a) Laid flat on the ground.

b) The owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial will be notified, and instructed to have the memorial safely re-erected.

12. EXHUMATION (Code: 7.0)

The Manager takes overall responsibility for the safety precautions that are needed and ensure that the operations are carried out in such a manner so as to prevent as far as is reasonably practicable any danger to the health and safety of the operatives. The Environmental Health Officer will be responsible for preventing the spread of disease and for ensuring there is no danger to public health.

Whilst the Manager supervising the operation has overall responsibility for procedures carried out under his/her direction, the responsibility for operating a safe system of work in general terms lies with the gravedigger.

No member of Parish Council staff apart from the Manager, will take any part in an exhumation.

13. PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF DISEASE (Code: 7.3)

The Manager will ensure that all work people have protective clothing to minimise the likelihood of the spread of disease and that all clothing provided for this purpose will be worn by the operatives during the operation.

The gravediggers must wear adequate footwear but, during the exhumation, it may be necessary for them to wear safety wellingtons of the correct size and in a good condition that can be readily disinfected after the operation has been completed.

Clean protective overalls must be worn by the gravediggers during the time of the exhumation (these preferably to be of a disposable type).

Rubber protective gloves must be worn by the gravediggers when handling the coffin or remains. These gloves must be of recent manufacture and in good condition. They should be tested for pinholes before being worn to ensure there is no risk from the rubber perishing.

The gravediggers should have a further supply of gloves readily available in case of damage; gloves must be of the correct size.

Sufficient respirators of the disposable type should be readily available on site for all personnel (Supervisors (Manager) and operatives) that are present.

The conditions of the Licence, Faculty or Warrant must be observed and when ground lime is called for as part of those conditions, it should be freely sprinkled over the coffin, any remains which may be exposed, and any soil removed from or adjoining the grave.

It is the responsibility of the Manager to ensure that both respirators and dustproof goggles are worn by all persons in the immediate vicinity when freshly made ground lime is spread in conditions that may give rise to a hazard as part of the conditions of the licence.

Disinfectant, ground lime, or any other chemicals will be stored in accordance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Act 1988 and all manufacturers recommendations with regard to protective clothing will be strictly adhered to.

Disinterring the Coffin

The Manager will be satisfied wherever possible that the coffin to be moved is that of the person referred to in the 'Licence' and the precautions necessary will depend on the condition of the coffin and remains, although it will not be possible to determine this condition exactly until the coffin is exposed. The Manager will give direction as to the precautions to be observed, which will reflect the conditions of the Licence, Faculty or Warrant and the following procedures:-

Where the coffin is intact and can be lifted in one piece, and if required within the conditions of the Licence, Faculty or Warrant, the coffin will be liberally sprinkled with fresh ground lime, after which it can be examined for seepage. If no seepage is occurring and the coffin is to be re-interred in the same site this operation will be carried out forthwith. If alternatively the coffin is not seeping but requires removal to another site, it will be enclosed in new coffin or shell, which has been made in such a way so as to prevent seepage from the joints, and surrounded by 4 inches of newly made ¼ inch grade vegetable charcoal and transferred to the new site as soon as possible.

If, on examination, the coffin does show signs of seepage, the coffin and surrounding areas that have been contaminated will be treated with fresh ground lime as stated in 7.4.2, assuming the use of lime has been given as a condition of the Licence, Faculty or Warrant. The coffin will be placed in a well sealed coffin or shell and surrounded by 4" of ¼ inch newly made vegetable charcoal after which the coffin can be removed for re-interment.

If the coffin has deteriorated to such an extent that it cannot be lifted whole or if the remains are exposed, then it will be necessary to remove the remains manually from the grave ensuring that the coffin, soil and other offensive matter are treated in accordance with the conditions of the Licence, Faculty or Warrant, or in any case are liberally sprinkled with ground lime. The coffin and remains will then be immediately placed in a well-pitched or otherwise waterproofed shell and entirely surrounded by 100mm (4") of newly made ¼ inch grade vegetable charcoal. This shell will then be sealed and removed for re-interment. Pitched coffins will not be used if the remains are to be cremated.

One must have due consideration as to the propriety of removing remains where a coffin has collapsed within a short period from interment. In the event of the coffin having broken up and the remains being at an advanced stage of decomposition the removal is not recommended unless specific instructions are received from the approved authorities.

There are certain circumstances where the original burial may have taken place many years ago and all that will be found on the grave site, when exposed, will be fragments of bone. In these circumstances, no offensive matter may be found and, boxing of the remains will be necessary, there is little point in surrounding the remains in newly made vegetable charcoal and, unless categorically specified in the Exhumation Licence, this procedure may be disposed with.

The above criteria act as a general guide but it is not possible to cover all situations and the Manager supervising the work has the discretion to react to conditions found on site. The Environmental Health Officer present has the responsibility to prevent the spread of disease. It will be this officer's responsibility to see that the conditions laid down in the 'Licence' are adhered to and that any special conditions are observed.

NOTE *There may be special conditions applied if the body is to be exported or removed by air etc.*

Vaults

When an exhumation takes place from a vault, it will be necessary to ensure that it is opened up for ventilation purposes prior to the dis-interment. This is best achieved by opening up more than one entrance if possible to allow a through current of air.

The Environmental Health Officer before entering the vault will take all necessary precautions to satisfy himself that the quality of air within the vault is fit to breathe.

Dust can also be a problem in vaults and where a dust nuisance is anticipated, respirators will be used.

Disinfectants

Phenolic fluids will be stored in the original metal containers and the necessary amounts recommended for dilution poured into a suitable bucket, the dilution recommended by the manufacturers will be used for washing down soiled items of equipment and contaminated or soiled clothing. Rubber gloves and wellingtons will be washed in disinfectant prior to being washed down under cold water.

Site Facilities - Gloves, Wellingtons, Helmets and Goggles

After contact with the coffin remains and on completion of the operation, all gloves and wellingtons will be washed down in a sterilising solution using a suitable disinfectant of a Phenolic fluid of the recommended dilution. Prior to the disinfecting of gloves and wellingtons, they will be washed free gross soiling.

Overalls

(a) In the case of re-usable clothing overalls will be sterilised by immersion in a suitable disinfectant (1% Sudol) for a period of 20-30 minutes. The articles will then be washed clean in running water and sent for laundry.

(b) If disposable overalls and respirators are used as recommended on completion of the task they will be placed in a polythene bag, sealed and sent for disposal as instructed by the Environmental Health Officer.

Eye Wash

Suitable water facilities for eye wash will be available on site to deal with chemical contamination of the eyes.

Washing

Facilities will be available nearby for the workmen to thoroughly wash down their clothing and equipment and a supply of hot water, soap, towel and nail brush will be provided to enable them to thoroughly wash their hands prior to taking a meal, or eating any form of food (including sweets).

Smoking

Smoking may present a risk to health by introducing bacteria or chemicals to the smokers lips.

Smoking will therefore be prohibited throughout the process.

Source: Code of Safe Working Practice for Cemeteries - 1992 (I.B.C.A.)

Adopted 9.6.98

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