

Memorial Management Policy



Canterbury City Council's Memorial Management Policy

Any memorial purchased and erected on a grave space is owned by the registered grave owner and it is that person or persons who are ultimately responsible for its upkeep and maintenance.

Historically, there have been several accidents in cemeteries and churchyards around the UK, some of which have resulted in fatalities, due to memorials being unsafe. Whilst the memorials are the responsibility of the registered grave owner, Canterbury City Council have a responsibility for ensuring that its sites are safe for both staff to work in and for the public to visit.

This Memorial Management Policy sets out the actions the council will take to ensure its sites remain safe. The order of works to be carried out will be determined by a site-based risk assessment with higher priority areas being undertaken first.

Memorial fixing

All memorials over 24.5 inches (625 mm) in height must be fixed to, and fully compliant, with the current British Standard (BS8415). This also extends to ANY memorial over 24.5" (625mm) that is being re-fixed following an interment or removal for any other reason.

The key requirements are that memorials must be fixed to an approved and suitable foundation (where one is not provided by the Authority) and must be further secured using an approved locking or anchoring system.

Full details of the sizes permitted for memorials throughout Canterbury City Council sites are contained in detail within its policy document that covers all the service's regulations. Further details on the materials and methods used for fixing and re-fixing of memorials can be found at www.bramm-uk.org

Note that any refixing or repair works to memorials must be completed by a BRAMM (or other equivalent scheme) council-registered memorial mason. Temporary works to make memorials safe and remove the risk of danger will be undertaken by trained staff or council registered memorial masons, as required.

Publicity and communication

The council undertakes to keep all interested parties and the public informed of any inspections or works programmed for memorials in burial grounds (cemeteries and any closed churchyards) where it has a direct or other management responsibility.

The council will make clear in its relevant agreements the primary responsibility of owners of memorials and the terms and conditions it requires to be entered into when granting a right to erect a memorial.

Before undertaking any memorial inspection programme, the council will:

- Place prominent notices on the site, prior to commencement.
- Place advertisements in local newspapers, accompanied by press releases.
- Provide further information on the council website.

Equipment, etiquette and safe working practice

No lone working is allowed. Survey teams to always work in two's equipped with:-

- Steel toe-capped boots
- Fluorescent safety vests
- Gloves
- Safety helmets if dealing with memorials above 1.4m high,
- Mobile telephones to alert services in case of accident or contact with cemeteries office and/or contractor staff
- Hazard warning tape
- Digital camera – to photograph memorial before and/or after failure
- Survey record sheets/iPad with associated software
- Wooden posts, banding and signage.
- Stability tester and bag
- Cemetery plans
- Staff identity cards
- First aid kit stored within a reasonable distance to the area of working

Surveys must only be carried out in dry weather and in good lighting conditions. Terrain in cemeteries can undulate, undetected potholes can exist and stumbling can occur. The cemetery grass is kept to a minimum height, as specified in the contract document. This is for safety as well as visual amenity reasons to enable undulations and hazards to be readily detected visually.

No test must be carried out if it may cause a danger to nearby visitors and staff.

Survey work must stop during funerals taking place anywhere within the vicinity of the survey area.

Staff demeanour must convey a sensitive, discreet, respectful, polite, serious and professional attitude always, particularly having regard to the potentially upsetting nature of their activity.

No one officer should continue the survey if the team colleague leaves the vicinity for any reason.

Memorial inspections

All memorials in all cemeteries will be inspected by trained staff at least once during a rolling five year period to assess their safety. This will be done through both a visual assessment and a basic hand test to determine if there is movement in the memorial and to what extent.

Only enough pressure should be exerted to assess the point of failure and not to topple the monument if at all avoidable.

Please note, that we also undertake 'dynamic risk assessments' of memorials within proximity of upcoming burials, to ensure the safety of our cemetery visitors.

The individual undertaking the assessment will make the decision on the memorial's overall safety based on a risk assessment for which they have been trained.

Memorials will be inspected in accordance with the following categories:

- Memorials up to 500mm: full visual inspection and hand stress test.
- Memorials 500mm to 1500mm: full visual inspection and hand stress test.

- Memorials 1500mm to 2500mm: full visual inspection, primary hand stress test (non complex structures), review for more complex structures in line with below; and
- Memorials over 2500mm and complex structures: full visual inspection, note potential problems and consider cordon off, follow up inspection supported by structural engineer and/or qualified stonemason.
- Where deemed necessary by inconclusive hand stress tests, a mechanical force stability tester may be applied.

Use of the stability tester

The prescribed pressure to be used to test memorial stability is up to 35 kg. Degrees of pressure from 1kg up to 35kg. This is the level applied to a 'loose' headstone.

At present, no account is taken of height or thickness because, in any event, if failure occurs at 35kg, it proves that failure will occur via exertion by body weight which means it could be a danger to someone or, simply, fall over.

The tester should be applied at two thirds of the way up or at the apex of the headstone. Failure may occur from either direction if applied to front or back of headstone (for example if applied to the front, failure may not occur but may occur if applied to the back of the same stone – or vice versa). If in doubt apply in both directions – this includes the 'hand test'.

Once inspected each memorial will fall into one of three categories, detailed as follows:

Category 1 – Memorial is unsafe and poses a risk and will require immediate attention to make it safe and/or to protect from the public.

Category 2 – Memorial is safe but there are minor concerns, and it should be reassessed in 12 months' time to ensure it has not deteriorated further.

Category 3 – Memorial is safe and should be re-inspected in five years as part of the next round of

inspections or as part of any other check that may occur, for example when checking memorials around a planned burial ahead of excavation of the grave.

Staff undertaking the inspections will record the details of every memorial and an assessment of its safety using the categories above. These details will be recorded onto the Bereavement Services administration system. The details will include:

- Date of inspection
- Name of inspector
- Grave identification (section and number)
- Category of memorial (1, 2 or 3)
- Details of any actions taken

Actions post inspection

Should a memorial be identified as a Category 1 and fail the inspection staff will need to take immediate action to make that memorial temporarily safe or cordon it off until permanent repairs can be made by the grave owner. These actions will be based on several factors, and the best solution will be administered by the memorial inspection team based on their assessment of the memorial and the surrounding area. These actions may include:

- **Laying the memorial flat** – In most cases this will invariably be where a memorial can be laid down on or within an existing kerb set so as not to cause a new trip hazard. A warning sign will be placed near the memorial.
- **Staked and banded** – The memorial will be fastened tight to a wooden post which will act as a temporary support. The banding will also hold a warning notice. The stake and band will need re-inspecting in six months to ensure neither have deteriorated and will be laid flat if repairs have not been suitably undertaken.
- **Monolith conversion** – This involves digging out a depth roughly one third of the overall height of the memorial from the last joint in order that it can be sunk into the ground and

made safe. The memorial will have a suitable material wrapped around the part under the ground and a memorial warning notice will be added to the grave. Due to foundations, it may be necessary for the memorial to be moved slightly forward into the grave space to avoid existing foundations.

- **Cordoned off** – In some cases it may be necessary to cordon off a particular memorial or an area containing several memorials due to their safety. Warning signs will be attached to any cordon placed around a memorial or group of memorials.
- **Removal** – In extreme cases it may be necessary to remove a memorial from the grave and place it into storage if none of the above options are suitable.

All the above are regarded as 'temporary fixes' and should not be seen as a permanent solution to deal with an unsafe memorial and are intended to reduce or remove the risk of a memorial causing harm or damage to someone.

Prior to taking any of the actions above the memorial will be photographed and details recorded of any existing damage or issues.

Very large memorials, those over 8' (2.5M) will be visually assessed and if any concerns are recorded the memorial will be cordoned off and if it is safe and possible to do so, staff will carry out works to ensure the memorials are safe. If staff cannot make the memorial safe arrangements will be made for a specialist contractor to undertake an inspection and provide a detailed report including costs and options to make it safe.

Please note that all memorials that are deemed unsafe within a closed churchyard or closed cemetery, will be automatically laid down.

Informing grave owners

Canterbury City Council will endeavour to contact the grave owner where any action has been taken due to a memorial failing a safe inspection.

Correspondence will only be sent providing that the grave owner is not recorded as being in the grave or if it is apparent that the registered address no longer exists. For any memorials over 50 years of age no correspondence will be sent but a notice will be left in the grave space for a period of not less than 12 months.

Any memorial that fails an inspection that has been installed within the previous six years will contact the memorial mason directly to request repairs be made to ensure the memorial is fully compliant with BS8415.

Please note that due to the council not possessing grave owner details for closed churchyards and closed cemeteries, no owners can will informed of this action.

Grave owners responsibilities

The registered grave owner has a responsibility to ensure the memorial is made safe through being properly re-fixed to the current BS8415 standard and works must be undertaken by a qualified BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) registered memorial mason. Do it yourself repairs by families will not be permitted.

All costs associated with organising a memorial to be repaired, including the reversal of any works undertaken by staff, remain the responsibility of the grave owner.

Should grave owners fail to take any action within a reasonable time then Canterbury City Council will look to apply a semi-permanent solution to the memorial, this will involve either laying the memorial flat or sinking the memorial into the ground (monolith conversion).

Jonathon Kreffer BSc, MICCM(DipHons)
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