

MEMORIAL MANAGEMENT POLICY – Sleaford Road Cemetery

Adopted by Ruskington Parish Council on 11 June 2024

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For review in June 2025

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 a number of accidents in cemeteries 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 Ruskington Parish Council (RPC) has a responsibility for ensuring that its cemetery is safe for staff and contractors to work in and for the public to visit.

This Memorial Management Policy sets out the actions the Council will take to ensure its cemetery 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" (625 mm) 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 Sleaford Road cemetery is contained in detail within its policy document that covers all of the services 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 member of the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM), or other equivalent scheme registered memorial mason. Temporary works to make memorials safe and remove the risk of danger will be undertaken by trained RPC caretakers or stonemason/contractor.

Memorial Inspections

All memorials over 24" in height in all cemeteries will be inspected by trained staff at least once during a rolling 5-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.

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

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 safe and/or 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 5 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 on RPC's cemetery 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 staff will take immediate action to make that memorial temporarily safe or cordon it off until permanent repairs can be arranged by the grave owner. These actions will be based on a number of 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 to 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 be re-inspected every 12 months to ensure neither have deteriorated.
- **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** – For safety reasons, it may be necessary to cordon off a particular memorial or an area containing several memorials. 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 into storage if none of the above options are suitable.

The post-inspection actions are temporary solutions to deal with unsafe memorials and reduce or remove the risk of causing harm or further damage.

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 any concerns recorded. Unsafe memorials will be cordoned off and, where possible, made safe by RPC. If RPC staff are not able to make the memorial safe, arrangements will be made for a specialist contractor to undertake an inspection and provide a detailed report including costs for remedial options.

Informing Grave Owners

Ruskington Parish Council will endeavour to contact the grave owner where any action has been taken due to a memorial failing a safety 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 on 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 6 years we will contact the memorial mason directly to request repairs be made to ensure the memorial is fully compliant with BS8415.

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 and BRAMM registered Memorial Mason. Do it yourself repairs by families or non-qualified third parties will not be permitted.

All costs associated with memorial repair, including the reversal of any works undertaken by RPC staff, remain the responsibility of the grave owner.

Should grave owners fail to take remedial actions within a reasonable period, Ruskington Parish Council will take actions in accordance with this Policy, to reduce the potential for harm or further damage.