

OLD CATTON PARISH COUNCIL

MEMORIAL MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out the Parish Council's approach to managing memorials at Old Catton Cemetery and the closed Churchyard at St Margarets Church. The policy covers the responsibilities, the approach process, assessment and testing procedures, practices for temporarily making memorials safe and the processes for memorial owners to effect repairs.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Rules & Regulations.

Please see the Parish Council website www.oldcattonparishcouncil.co.uk for the latest versions of all relevant documents.

2. Definitions

Memorial – any headstone or tablet or plaque or other memorial affixed or placed upon a grave plot.

GoERB (Exclusive Right of Burial) – a deed of right to burial and installation of a memorial issued by the Burial Authority. Note: The EroB does not confer any land ownership rights.

Rules & Regulations– the 'rules' established by the Burial Authority that govern the operation of the Burial Ground which must be adhered to by EroB owners.

3. Responsibilities

The Parish Council/Burial Authority

The Parish Council acts as the statutory Burial Authority under the Local Authority Cemeteries Order 1977. The term Parish Council and Burial Authority are effectively synonymous for the purposes of this policy.

Responsibility for the overall safety (duty of care) within the burial grounds lies with the Burial Authority. The Burial Authority has responsibility under Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 to ensure that '**as far as is reasonably practicable**' the burial ground is maintained in a safe condition. This includes ensuring that anyone who enters the site to carry out work, attend interments, visit graves or for any other reason, can do so safely.

The burial grounds are open to the public at all times, therefore the Health & Safety of visitors, employees and contractors who are visiting or working in the burial grounds is the primary concern of the Burial Authority. There is frequent footfall, particularly at the Churchyard and both attract many visitors. The general level of risk is therefore considered low/medium.

The Burial Authority will carry out inspections of memorials to identify potential hazards and reduce risk where possible. Any memorials identified as Category 1 (Unsafe) will be made

safe temporarily and, where possible, memorial owners contacted. The full procedure for inspection, testing and communication with owners is set out later in this policy.

While responsibility for general safety is the responsibility of the Burial Authority, there are specific responsibilities that lie with the owners of any memorials and the memorial masons responsible for installing them.

Memorial Owners

Owners of GoERB are responsible for maintaining any memorial associated with their burial plot ensuring that it is in good, safe condition in accordance with the Rules & Regulations.

The Burial Authority will regularly inspect graves, test memorials and, where possible, bring any defects to the attention of owners. **ONLY** those memorials found to be Category 1 unsafe (as defined) will be temporarily made safe by the Burial Authority. For the avoidance of doubt, 'making safe' may include laying the headstone flat. A notice of all Category 1 memorials will be posted on the Burial Authority website and noticeboard located at the Cemetery.

Memorial installation and ownership is a significant and long-term undertaking and the Parish Council urges memorial owners to obtain adequate insurance as they would with any other property. Advice on insurance is best obtained from memorial masons who are familiar with the market.

Memorial owners must keep their contact details (address, phone and email) up to date with the Burial Authority as these will be used to contact owners in the event of a problem. Failure to advise the Burial Authority of a change of address could lead to unnecessary distress for all involved.

Memorial Masons

Memorial masons are legally liable for the work they carry out and must ensure that memorials are erected safely and in accordance with British Standard BS8415. Memorial masons must also comply with Burial Authority regulations and obtain consent before any work can proceed.

4. Installation Approval

Old Catton Cemetery

Owners of the GoERB at Old Catton Cemetery have entitlement to install a headstone or memorial plaque subject to the Burial Ground regulations and this policy.

Any installation of any memorial **MUST** be approved in advance by the Burial Authority. Approval will not usually be withheld provided that the memorial is installed in accordance with the Burial Ground Regulations.

Alterations such as repairs and additional inscriptions **MUST** be approved in advance by the Burial Authority.

ALL work at the Cemetery must be pre-approved with the Burial Authority before being carried out.

Closed Churchyard, St Margarets Church

Whilst the Parish Council is responsible for the management of the closed churchyard, the Church are responsible for the administration of owners of GoERB. Any request for installation of replacement memorials should be directed to the Church Warden.

Churchyard, St Margarets Church

The administration of the cremation area within the churchyard is the responsibility of the Church. All enquiries should be directed to the Church Warden.

5. Inspection and Testing Procedures

Notice

A minimum of three weeks advance notice of headstone testing will be given via:

- A notice on the Parish Council website;

Baseline Inspection 2024/26

As this is a new policy, all headstone in the burial grounds will be survey between the adoption of this policy in September 2024 and September 2026. This survey will establish a baseline of data to inform an ongoing programme of inspection and testing. All inspections and associated testing will be undertaken by a suitably qualified and accredited external contractor appointed by the Parish Council, in accordance with relevant industry standards and guidance.

This baseline inspection data and subsequent test results will be recorded and maintained within a dedicated database.

Testing Procedure

Every headstone may have the following visual inspection data recorded using the burial ground plot number as core reference:

- General photograph(s);
- Note of any issues (eg cracks, leaning, ground heave, etc);
- Photograph of specific issues;
- Note of foundations – type and condition;
- Other notable grave features.

Following this visual inspection each memorial will be subjected to a basic hand pressure test from front to rear and vice versa. If no movement is felt then the memorial will be recorded as Category 3 (Safe). If any movement is felt, then a measured force test will be undertaken as below.

The Force Test

A force of 25kg will be applied from front to rear and rear to front using a calibrated force test meter. Following the force test each memorial will be classified as follows:

Category 1: Unsafe. Immediate action is required to make the memorial safe and/or to stop the public accessing the memorial. this could include laying the memorial flat.

Category 2: Monitoring. The memorial is not fully stable but is not an immediate danger to the public and/or the memorial has some major defect and/or it is in a higher risk location (eg near a footpath).

Category 1 Memorials

Memorials classified as Category 1 (Unsafe).

Following the force test memorial will be immediately made safe temporarily using an appropriate method to the size and style of the memorial.

Attempts will be made to contact the owner using contact details held by the Burial Authority to advise the owner to contact a memorial mason to re-fix/re-set the headstone within 3months of the failed test.

In the event that the grave owner does not contact the Burial Authority or get the headstone reattached within 3months of the failed test, the Burial Authority reserves the right to remove the memorial for reasons of public safety. Removed memorials will be stored for a minimum period of 12months, during which time they may be reclaimed upon payment of any reasonable costs. Memorials not reclaimed within this period may be disposed of without further notice.

Category 2 Memorials

Memorials classified as Category 2 (Monitoring).

The memorial is not considered an immediate danger to the public but requires remedial work. The owner must arrange for the necessary repairs to be completed by memorial mason within 10months of notification. Failure to do so may result in the Burial Authority making the memorial safe and recovering all reasonable costs from the GoERB owner.

Category 3 Memorials

Memorials classified as Category 3 (Safe).

Memorials will be inspected annually from the date of the baseline inspection.

6. New Memorial Testing

Old Catton Cemetery

All newly installed memorials will be tested between 18months and 2years after installation. This will provide assurance to the EroB owner that the memorial has been installed correctly and allow plenty of time for any issues to be rectified by the memorial mason within the guarantee period.

Churchyard, St Margarets Church

The administration of the cremation area within the churchyard is the responsibility of the Church. All enquiries should be directed to the Church Warden.

7. Refixing and Resetting Headstones or Plaques

As stated in the Rules & Regulations, it is ENTIRELY the responsibility of the GoERB owner to have defects corrected.

If the GoERB owner is deceased, then surviving family members (if found) will be given the option of taking over the GoERB subject to the usual due diligence and fees, or transferring ownership back to the Burial Authority. The Burial Authority will then make all decisions regarding the memorial and the plot.

This Policy was approved and adopted on: 9th September 2024

Reviewed:

DRAFT