

# Adderbury Parish Council

## Memorial Stability Policy for Adderbury Cemetery

DRAFT

## Why test Memorials?

Over the years, a number of people in the UK have been killed when a memorial has fallen on them. Given the number of memorials and the number of visitors to burial grounds in any year, the risk of death is very low indeed. The risk of serious injury is also extremely low, based on available statistics.

However, the Parish Council has a duty under Health and Safety legislation to ensure that there is a safe environment for its visitors and it is required to manage the risks involved. There are simple steps we can take to assess and manage any risks posed by memorials in our burial grounds, and a testing programme is an essential part of that process. It has been recommended that all burial authorities should carry out regular inspections on their memorials, using a risk based assessment process.

Where they identify unsafe memorials through this inspection programme, they have a responsibility to ensure such memorials are not a danger to visitors and employees in the burial ground.

## Who's responsible?

Whilst the responsibility for general safety lies with the Parish Council as the burial authority, there are specific responsibilities for memorials that lie with both the owner of the memorial and the memorial mason responsible for installing it. The owner of the memorial is responsible for maintaining the memorial in a good condition.

When it comes to ensuring the memorial is erected safely, the owner is not the expert; the expert is the memorial mason who erects the memorial.

Memorial masons are liable for the work they carry out and should ensure that memorials are erected safely and in accordance with current standards. Masons who wish to carry out work within our Cemetery must agree to work to the Namm Code of Working Practice.

## Raising Awareness

Before the inspection programme commences, the Parish Council will ensure the public are informed about the work to be carried out by:

1. Information on the Parish Council's website
2. Notices within the Cemetery notice board
3. Demonstration session if required.

## Training

Contractors will provide evidence of training, adequate public liability insurance and suitable risk assessments and safe method of working before the Parish Council authorises access into the Cemetery.

## Inspection

All memorials will receive:

- a visual inspection; and

- a physical hand test.

The following methodology will be followed for each phase of the inspection: All memorials in the burial ground should be visually assessed as part of the overall risk assessment process.

Memorials should be assessed bearing in mind the following issues:

- Are joints intact?
- Are kerbs etc breaking apart?
- Is the memorial leaning?
- Are the foundations (where evident) intact?
- What are the ground conditions like?
- Is it a hard or a soft stone?
- Are faults or cracks present?

### **Memorials up to 1.m**

The maximum height for a memorial in Adderbury Cemetery is 1m. A base of stone or concrete not exceeding 60 centimetres long by 1.10 metres wide will be allowed with a minimum thickness of 7.5 centimetres, but thicker where required and this must finish flush with the ground. The concrete base at the back and sides of the Stones and Crosses shall be 15 centimetres wide to allow for mowing.

Memorials below 500mm in height are unlikely to be the cause of fatal accident. A visual inspection will take place, risks found will be recorded and families will be contacted.

Memorials up to 1m are a greater hazard as they could cause fatal injuries. A physical hand test will take place following a visual inspection of all memorials, as a confirmation of stability. The physical hand test is the gradual build-up of a force at the apex of the memorial or as high up the memorial as can comfortably be reached by the operative. If the memorial fails the test, the failure will be recorded (providing evidence to any potential complainant).

Following the inspection, the memorials will be put into a category and an action plan will be drawn up outlining any precautions to be taken. These will be proportionate to the risk of people suffering harm.

#### **1. Immediate**

Danger Immediate action is required to minimise the risk of injury by erecting warning signs and areas being cordoned off if within a high risk area (i.e. along pathway, roadway, well visited area).

#### **2. Re-inspect in 12 months**

The memorial is not an immediate danger to the public but needs to be monitored every 12 months to assess any further deterioration of the memorial.

#### **3. Re-inspect in 5 years**

The memorial is perfectly stable and will only need to be inspected in 5 years time.

### **Unsafe Memorials**

These memorials will have warning signs erected in the first instance and the area maybe cordoned off depending on the area where situated, high risk along a footpath or roadway. Only where the memorial is deemed to be in imminent danger of collapse and also to be in a high risk location will action be taken to lay the memorial down. This will be a measure of last resort.

### **Warning Signs/Notices**

Warning signs will be placed on the unsafe memorials indicating that there are hazards present and that memorials have failed the test. The area may be cordoned off.

### **Notifying Grave Owners**

The owner of any memorial that fails the inspection would be contacted, if possible. This will mean writing to the last known address of the owners of memorials. It will be made clear that inspections have been carried out in line with nationally agreed guidance and that as the memorial has failed the owner is responsible for reinstating it to an approved specification such as the NAMM Code of Working Practice.

A list of failed memorials will be published in the cemetery noticeboard, website, and a list will be sent to all stonemasons registered on our scheme.

### **Record of Inspection**

Every memorial within our Cemetery will be inspected and a record maintained of the inspection. The essential information required for the initial inspection is:

- Name of Inspector
- Date of Inspection
- Plot Number
- Name of deceased
- Type of memorial - headstone, cross, kerbs, etc
- Size of memorial

A number of elements need to be identified in order to assess the memorials condition: (Pass or Fail is required for each of these on the initial inspection).

- Are there any cracks in the memorial?
- Is the memorial leaning?
- Are the joints intact?
- Is the memorial rocking?

If the memorial failed, the reason for the failure and condition of the memorial will be recorded.

### **Basis of Policy**

This policy is based upon guidance contained within "Managing the Safety of Burial Ground Memorials" issued by the Burials and Cemeteries Advisory Group, which advises the Government on all aspects of Burial Law.