



## Great Gonerby Parish Council

### Memorial management policy

1. This policy sets out the Council's approach to managing memorials at the Hill Top Burial Ground and St Sebastian's Church Parish Burial Ground. It details the responsibilities, the approval process, assessment and testing procedures, practices for temporarily making memorials safe and the processes for memorial owners to effect repairs. It should be read in conjunction with the Burial Ground Regulations.

### Definitions

2. **Memorial.** Any headstone, tablet or plaque or other memorial affixed or placed upon a grave plot.
3. **Memorial force test.** A force of 25 kg will be applied from front to rear and rear to front, using a calibrated force test meter, to see whether the memorial moves.
4. **Memorial Category 1.** If memorials are classified as Category 1 - Unsafe following the force test, immediate action is required to make the memorial safe and / or to stop the public accessing the memorial. This could include laying the headstone flat.
5. **Memorial Category 2.** If memorials are classified as 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 (e.g. near a footpath).
6. **Memorial Category 3.** Memorials are Classified as Category 3 – Safe if there is no movement detected following the force test and there are no major defects visible.
7. **Exclusive Right of Burial (ERoB).** A deed of right to burial and the installation of a memorial issued by the Burial Authority. Note: The ERoB does not confer any land ownership rights.
8. **Burial ground regulations.** The rules established by the Burial Authority that govern the operation of the Burial Ground which must be adhered to by ERoB owners.
9. **The Council.** The Council acts as the statutory Burial Authority under the Local Authority Cemeteries Order 1977. The terms Council and Burial Authority are effectively synonymous for the purposes of this policy.

### Responsibilities

10. **The Council.** The Council has responsibility, under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Act 1957, for overall safety (duty of care) within the burial grounds. Through regular inspections, they will identify potential hazards and reduce risk where possible to ensure that 'as far as is reasonably practicable' the burial grounds are maintained in a safe condition. This includes ensuring that anyone who enters either site to carry out work, attend interments, visit graves or for any other reason, can do so safely. The Burial Grounds are located away from population centres and do not generally attract many visitors, so the general level of risk is considered low.

11. **Memorial owners.** Owners of the ERoB (memorial owners) are responsible for maintaining any memorial associated with their burial plot in good, safe condition in accordance with the Burial Ground Regulations. They are also responsible for making appropriate repairs when the Council deems the memorial to be Category 1 (Unsafe) so may have made it temporarily safe. For the avoidance of doubt, 'making safe' may include laying the headstone flat. If the owner of the ERoB is deceased, then surviving family members (if found) will be given the option of taking over the ERoB, subject to the usual due diligence and fees, or transferring ownership back to the Council. If the latter applies, then the Council will make all decisions regarding the memorial and the plot.

12. **Insurance.** 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.

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

14. **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 the Council Regulations and obtain a signed permit (form BG8 on the website) before work can proceed. All work at the Burial Ground must be pre-approved by the Council before being carried out. The Clerk only works part-time but can be contacted at [clerk@greatgonerbyparish.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@greatgonerbyparish.gov.uk)

## **Burial Grounds management**

15. **Installation approval.** Owners of the ERoB at the Burial Grounds have automatic entitlement to install a headstone or memorial plaque. The installation and / or alteration of any memorial, such as repairs and additional inscriptions, must be approved in advance by the Council. A memorial alteration application (form BG6) is available on the Council website. Approval will not usually be withheld provided that the memorial is installed in accordance with the Burial Ground Regulations.

16. **New Memorial Testing.** All newly installed memorials will be tested between 18 months and two years after installation. This will provide assurance to the grave 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.

17. **Baseline inspection and testing.** All headstones in the Burial Grounds will be surveyed during 2026. This survey will establish a baseline of data to inform an ongoing

programme of inspection and testing. All testing will be undertaken by the Parish Clerk and / or a Councilor who has received appropriate training from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management. This baseline inspection data and subsequent test results will be recorded in a database.

**18. Routine inspection and testing.** A minimum of three weeks' notice of headstone testing will be given via free standing signs at each entrance to the Burial Grounds, a notice on the Council website and posts to local social media. Every headstone will be subject to an annual visual inspection and a hand force test: if any movement is felt, then a measured force test will be undertaken. The following information will be recorded, using the burial ground plot number as the core reference: general photograph(s), photographs of specific issues, a note of any issues (e.g. lean, cracks, ground heave or animal burrowing), notes about the type and condition of the foundations and other notable grave features.

**19. Repairs to memorials.** Any memorials identified as Category 1 (Unsafe) will be made safe temporarily using a method appropriate to the size and style of the memorial. A notice will be fixed to the headstone or posted on the grave advising the owner to contact a memorial mason to re-fix / re-set the headstone within 18 months of the failed test. Where possible, the Council will contact the memorial owners for them to make reparations. In the event that the grave owner does not contact the Council or get the headstone reaffixed within 18 months of the failed test, the Council will proceed to make the memorial permanently safe using an appropriate method and record a charge against the plot.