

Cemeteries

Information for Grave Owners

Burial Rights



The ownership of a Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial within a grave or garden of rest plot not only conveys certain rights upon the owner, but also imposes a number of responsibilities. These notes briefly describe the rights and responsibilities for your information. The Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial within a grave or plot does not convey ownership of the land itself. The ownership of the cemetery land, including the grave surface, remains with the Council. The Grant is in the form of a written Deed issued by the Council, and the period of the Grant is up to 100 years. During that period, the person registered as the owner of the Grant has the sole right to decide who may be interred within the grave or plot. At the end of the period, unless the Rights have been renewed, the Burial Rights cease to exist. The Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial also includes the right to have a memorial, of a design and method of construction approved by the Council, installed on the grave or plot after the appropriate fees have been paid for the permit. When a grave is full with respect to full interments, it may still be used for the interment of cremated remains. Burial rights for a cremated remains plot are for up to four interments of cremated remains. Burial rights for an infant grave are for a single interment of a child's coffin.

Information on Working Cemeteries

London Road and Westfield Road Cemeteries can accommodate new graves and re-open existing graves when required. Re-opened graves and reclaimed graves are available at Hatfield Road Cemetery. A Green Burial area is also available at Hatfield Road Cemetery. The lawn sections in our cemeteries are cut by the Council's contractors with a large mechanical cutter or triple mower.

The Gardens of Rest are strimmed, as is the grass surrounding memorials in all cemeteries. Glass or Pottery containers should not be placed on graves or plots, because there is a risk of these materials becoming fragile and shattering. When a new grave has to be dug or a grave re-opened, a mechanical digger is usually used. During periods when the ground is hard there should be no noticeable damage to the surrounding grass in that area. During periods of wet weather there may be some disturbance to nearby graves when it becomes necessary to drive the digger over grassed graves to reach the site to be excavated. The Council reserves the right to cross these graves in order to open a grave, and to place the excavated soil onto an adjacent grave. This area will be reinstated as soon as possible after the funeral has taken place.

Grave Maintenance

Lawn Sections have been laid out with consideration for ease of maintenance and simplicity of layout. No kerbstones or full-length gardens are allowed, and all planting is to be kept within 12 inches of the memorial. The placing of markers, fencing, gravel, chippings or glass containers cannot be allowed as these can obstruct the grass cutting and maintenance, and may be removed. Grave owners are encouraged to maintain this area themselves in order that the cemetery staff do not have to disturb any plants or artefacts present. Headstones should be a maximum of 3ft high and 2'6" wide. New Lawn sections (H & G) at London Road Cemetery have different rules and no planting is permitted. Flowers & pots may only be placed at the top of the grave on the gravel area.

Traditional Graves may be planted along the full length, or a qualified memorial mason may install kerbs after the relevant fee has been paid to the Council and a permit obtained. Grave owners must maintain planted areas or the area inside the kerbs to comply with Cemetery regulations. The maximum size for a kerb set is 6'6" x 3'.

Cremated Remains Plots - Memorial plaques of 12" x 12" x 2" only are allowed in the Gardens of Rest, plus a 5" x 5" x 5" vase if desired. Your appointed memorial mason will apply for permission to place a memorial and will pay the cemetery fee on behalf of the Grant owner. Each plot may hold four urns or caskets, with the plaque being positioned over the centre of the whole area not over the first cremated remains. Any objects or materials placed on the plots may be removed by Cemetery staff because they may hamper the work of grounds maintenance contractors. Some plot owners do not like to see what they consider to be inappropriate articles on other plots.

Graves - In the period following a burial the grave surface will be subject to sinkage due to soil settlement. The initial settlement may last for 4 to 12 months, during which time the contractors will top up the grave. It is helpful if items are not placed on the grave surface that will hinder the topping up procedure. Once the initial settlement has taken place, the surface will be grass seeded. Over future years the grave may continue to settle, and the contractors will always re-surface a grave upon request by the grant owner.

Re-opening - If a further burial is to take place, the Grant owner will need to ensure that any plants or personal artefacts are removed prior to the grave being opened. The funeral director will normally arrange for a memorial to be removed when a grave is to be reopened, although on some sections (B at present) at London Road this is not necessary.

Memorials

Grant owners are entitled to apply for permission to have a permanent memorial erected on a grave plot. The wooden temporary marker will be removed when a permanent memorial has been placed on the grave or if it becomes broken. Normally the application for a memorial will be completed and submitted, on behalf of the Grant owner, by the memorial mason appointed by the owner to carry out the work. Only masons on the Council's Register may carry out memorial work. The Grant owner is responsible for

ensuring that any memorial masonry installed on their grave plot has been properly constructed, and has been installed in accordance with the best practices of the memorial industry. It is reasonable for the Grant owner to expect their memorial supplier to guarantee their work for a set period and thirty years is now expected. We strongly advise Grant owners to take out insurance against damage or other problems because our cemeteries are open spaces accessible to all.

Memorial Maintenance

It is recommended that all memorials should be insured against theft, loss or damage. Most masons can arrange for insurance cover. The Grant owner is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the memorial, and any other items placed on the grave.

It is strongly recommended that the Grant owner should have the stability and condition of the memorial checked at least annually. Failure to do so may result in the Grant owner being held liable for any injury or death caused to a third party if the injury or death is shown to be due to the condition of the memorial or the manner in which it was installed.

The Council has a duty of care towards cemetery visitors. In order to comply with this duty, the Council will carry out safety inspections of memorials. In the event that a memorial is identified as being a potential hazard, the Council is duty bound to take action to reduce the risk to visitors. If the memorial is unstable and liable to fall, the memorial has to be carefully made safe or laid down on the ground to reduce the risk of injury to others. The Council will attempt to contact the Grant owner, at their last known address, to inform them of the reason for taking action. Regular memorial inspections arranged by the Grant owners themselves will avoid the need for such action.

Charter for the Bereaved

This Council has adopted the Charter for the Bereaved, which is a document giving certain rights, and provides a service that meets the social, ethical and environmental needs of the community. An abridged version of the charter rights is available upon request.

Cemetery Regulations

A copy of the cemetery regulations is available upon request.

Inspection of Cemetery Records

The cemetery records are available for inspection upon request.

Data Protection Act

In accordance with the above Act I need to inform you that your details may be disclosed to a funeral director or memorial mason providing goods or services for this grave.

Should you require further advice or information, please contact:

**The Cemeteries Manager, St Albans City and District Council, Hatfield Road
Cemetery Office, Hatfield Road Cemetery, Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts. AL1 4LU**
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