



# DATCHET PARISH COUNCIL

## Memorial Safety Inspection Policy

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Datchet Parish Council is committed to ensuring the safety of all visitors, staff, and contractors within its cemetery and will take all reasonably practicable steps to minimise risks.

The Council's memorial safety inspection procedure follows the guidance issued by the Burial and Cemeteries Advisory Group in England, which advises the Ministry of Justice on burial law. This guidance outlines best practices for risk management in burial grounds and provides a proportionate approach to assessing and managing memorial safety.

## **SCOPE**

This procedure applies specifically to the cemetery managed by Datchet Parish Council.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this procedure is to establish clear systems for managing and mitigating risks associated with memorials, ensuring the safety of employees, contractors, and members of the public to whom the Council has a duty of care.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Council's responsibilities are outlined in various pieces of legislation relating to burial grounds, including the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 (LACO). Additionally, the Council has general obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA74) and related regulations, such as the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

## **REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed every 5 years or sooner should legislation dictate or following any incident involving a memorial or any related accident.



## **PRE-INSPECTION PREPARATION**

### **1. METHOD STATEMENT**

- 1.1. Datchet Parish Council, or its chosen contractor, will prepare a Method Statement prior to the commencement of any safety testing.

### **2. INSPECTION OPERATIVES**

2.1. The Council will ensure that only authorised and competent personnel shall carry out the inspections. All such personnel will be required to read this Memorial Safety Policy and indicate their understanding and adherence to it by signing the Policy Agreement (Appendix 2).

- a. All memorial safety inspections will be carried out by a minimum of two operatives who will work as a team unless risk assessment determines that it is safe for one operative to work alone. Operatives will recognise when specialist assistance is required, for example where the memorial is complex or large (over 1.5 metres in height).
- b. At least one member of the inspection team will be a competent person (competence can be described as the combination of training, skills, experience and knowledge that a person has and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely).
- c. Personal protective equipment shall be worn by all members of the inspection team. This will include a high visibility vest and foot protection.
- d. A risk assessment for the safety of those carrying out the inspections will be completed and kept on file, along with a signed agreement that the council's chosen procedure will be followed.
- e. If the council employs a suitably qualified contractor to carry out the inspections, a copy of the company's public liability insurance will be lodged with the council.

### **3. RECORDS**

3.1. All memorial inspections will be recorded on the inspection form (Appendix 1). Records of the inspections will be held indefinitely. It is acceptable for these records to be held electronically on the condition that the information is regularly backed up.



## INSPECTION PROCESS

### 4. FREQUENCY OF INSPECTION

4.1. Inspections of all levels of risk will be carried out on a minimum frequency of once every five years.

4.2. Any memorial showing early signs of instability will be monitored every twelve months.

### 5. INSPECTION PROCESS

- 5.1 Risk Assessment
- 5.2 Communication and Notice of Intent
- 5.3 Visual Checks
- 5.4 Physical Test
- 5.5 Classifying the memorial
- 5.6 Actions for classified memorials

#### **5.1 RISK ASSESSMENT**

The inspection process will be comprised of the following:

An initial risk assessment will be carried out as per the Five Step approach to risk assessment set out by the Health and Safety Executive in the UK. This will identify where there is greater risk to those visiting or working in the cemetery and allow for the prioritisation of the memorials requiring immediate examination.

Items considered in this risk assessment include:

- Location to footpaths
- Frequency of use
- Duration of use
- Types of activity adjacent

#### **5.2 COMMUNICATION AND NOTICE OF INTENT**

The council is aware that the testing of memorials is a sensitive issue and will endeavour to ensure that adequate and regular communication is maintained with the general public.

28 days prior to any memorials being inspected the council will:

- Ensure notices are displayed within the Cemetery grounds.



These will give details of the forthcoming inspections, advise the public of the potential dangers of memorials, provide contact details for the public should they have any queries or concerns and, where necessary, fulfil any other obligations under existing health and safety legislation.

### **• Ensure public notices are posted within the Village.**

These will give details of the forthcoming inspections and provide contact details for the public should they have any queries or concerns. Notices shall be posted on the Council's noticeboards, website and social media, and a public notice placed in the local newspaper for two consecutive weeks. A list of Frequently Asked Questions (example Appendix 7) will be posted on the website.

The Council will also provide details of the assessment location and methodology on the Council's website.

### **5.3 VISUAL CHECKS**

Memorials will undergo an initial visual check to identify if there are obvious defects or signs of instability.

Operatives will look for:

- Damaged or eroding bonding
- Movement of parts of a memorial from its original position
- Kerb stones breaking apart
- Undermined or unstable foundations
- Leaning memorials – particularly if there is evidence of recent movement
- Evidence of structural damage or disturbance (e.g. cracks)
- The presence of vegetation, which may cause cracks to widen

### **5.4 PHYSICAL TEST**

If a defect or unstable memorial is observed, such memorials will then be subject to a physical test. Commonwealth War Graves - Any observable defects will be reported immediately to the War Graves Commission.

If a memorial does not pass a visual check, it will be subject to a physical check. Prior to any physical test a safety assessment will take place as follows:

- An overall visual inspection of all memorials for the purpose of assessing signs of instability and as part of the overall risk assessment process. A structural engineer will inspect memorials in excess of 1500mm in height.
- A physical hand test of memorials between 625mm and 1500mm in height to assess any lateral movement following the visual inspection.



- Memorials below 625mm in height should be assessed to establish whether there is any benefit in applying any force to the memorial.

The physical testing will only take place when there is no risk to other persons and will be done using a hand test. Force testing equipment will only be used in the case of dispute.

The procedure for carrying out a hand test is as follows:

- The inspection operative will stand to one side of the memorial and apply a firm but steady pressure in different directions to determine to what degree, if any, the headstone is loose.
- A gentle pressure/force should be gradually increased until a force of approximately 25kg is applied. This force should be exerted in one direction, away from the body and should be repeated from the back of the memorial. Other physical hand tests from the sides of the memorial may also be required on certain designs. The force should be applied at the apex of the memorial or a high up the memorial as can comfortably be reached.

### 5.5 CLASSIFYING THE MEMORIAL

At the completion of the testing process the operative will identify memorials in one of three categories:

**Category 1** – stable and not dangerous in any way; to be reassessed in five years

**Category 2** – requires immediate attention to make safe by stabilising with a stake and banding.

**Category 3** - requires immediate attention to make safe by laying down the memorial within the grave space

### 5.6 ACTIONS FOR CLASSIFIED MEMORIALS

Having considered the guidance and industry standards and the various options available, the council will apply the following approach to the assessed memorials:

#### **Category 1 memorials**

- No action required. To be reassessed in five years.

#### **Category 2 memorials**

The following action will be taken immediately:

- A Safety Notice (Appendix 4) will be placed on the memorial to warn of the unstable condition of the memorial.
- The memorial will be braced with a stake and banded.



- Photographs of the memorial will be taken at the time of the inspection and following the staking and banding. All photographs will be retained with the inspection records.
- The holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial will be identified and a Category 2 letter (Appendix 5) sent within seven working days. The letter will request the memorial repair is carried out within twelve weeks.
- Any repair carried out to the memorial will be at the cost to the EROB holder and must be carried out by a NAMM or BRAMM-registered memorial mason in accordance with BS8415. The holder of the EROB will inform the council when the work will be taking place and the finished work will be inspected by the council's memorial inspector.
- Where the holder of the EROB does not contact the council within the twelve-week period, and no repair is arranged for the memorial, a temporary support will remain in place until the advised re-inspection date, up to a maximum of eighteen months. At the end of the eighteen-month period, the memorial will be treated as a Category 3 memorial.

### ***Category 3 memorials***

The following action will be taken immediately:

- A Safety Notice (Appendix 4) will be placed on the memorial to warn of the immediate hazard.
- The memorial will be carefully laid flat within the grave space with the inscription visible. Larger memorials may be dismantled to remove the danger.
- Photographs of the memorial will be taken at the time of the inspection and following the memorial being laid down. All photographs will be retained with the inspection records.
- The holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial will be identified and a Category 3 letter (Appendix 6) sent within seven working days. The letter will request the memorial repair is carried out within twelve weeks.
- Any repair carried out to the memorial will be at the cost to the EROB holder and must be carried out by a NAMM or BRAMM-registered memorial mason in accordance with BS8415. The holder of the EROB will inform the council when the work will be taking place and the finished work will be inspected by the council's memorial inspector.





- Where the holder of the EROB does not contact the council within the twelve-week period, and no repair is arranged for the memorial, the memorial will remain laid flat until such time as the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial contacts the council. If necessary, a transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial will need to take place to enable the repair to go ahead.

It may be necessary to cordon off part of the cemetery to employees and public. In this case signage and information notices will be posted to give cautionary warning of the hazards will be present.

## **POST-INSPECTION PROCESS**

### **6. REPAIR WORK**

- 6.1. All work to repair or replace a memorial must be carried out by a NAMM or BRAMM-registered monumental mason and must be installed to BS8415. A guarantee of conformity will be issued to the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial by the mason, and a copy of this must be lodged with the council.
- 6.2. The council will keep a list of local, qualified and registered, monumental masons and this will be available from the Council Offices upon request. This list will be reviewed and updated annually.

**Signature:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. J.', written over a horizontal line.

**The Clerk**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

## DATCHET PARISH COUNCIL



## Appendix 1 - EXAMPLE

[illegible]

**Inspectors name:..... Signature:.....**

**Date:**.....



**Appendix 2**

**POLICY AGREEMENT – MEMORIAL SAFETY INSPECTION PROCEDURE**

I, ....., working on behalf of Datchet Parish Council,  
acknowledge that I have read and understood the Datchet Parish Council Memorial Safety  
Policy, and I agree to follow the policy and procedure contained within it regarding the  
safety inspection and testing of memorials in the Datchet Cemetery on Ditton Road.

Signed:.....

Dated:.....



Appendix 3

# PUBLIC NOTICE

Please note that Datchet Parish Council's ongoing safety programme involves the inspection of all memorials at:

**DITTON ROAD CEMETERY**

Section \_\_\_\_\_

Week commencing \_\_\_\_\_

Any memorial that has not met the health and safety requirements will be provided with a notice and temporary support. Additionally, a letter will be posted to the registered holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial for the grave, giving details of the action required by them to make the memorial safe.

For your own safety, and that of all visitors to the cemetery, **DO NOT** attempt to test memorials yourself. Any work to repair memorials must be undertaken by a qualified monumental mason.

**ALL MEMORIALS REMAIN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OWNER TO KEEP IN GOOD SAFE ORDER.**

We appreciate your assistance and co-operation in ensuring this cemetery is a safe place for everyone to visit.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding a memorial, or this notice, please contact **Datchet Parish Council** on

**01753 773499**

or

**clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk**



Appendix 4

# IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTICE

This memorial has been found to be unsafe during a safety inspection and test. It requires urgent attention to prevent injury to cemetery visitors.

If you are the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial for this grave, please contact Datchet Parish Council as a matter of urgency for further information, and to advise of your intentions to make safe.

For your own safety, and that of all visitors to the cemetery, **DO NOT** attempt to test memorials yourself.

Any work to repair memorials must be undertaken by a qualified, registered, monumental mason.

**ALL MEMORIALS REMAIN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OWNER TO  
KEEP IN GOOD SAFE ORDER.**

We appreciate your assistance and co-operation in ensuring this cemetery is a safe place for everyone to visit.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this memorial or notice, please contact

**Datchet Parish Council** on  
**01753 773499**

or

**[clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk)**



## Appendix 5

[Date]

[Recipient's Name]

[Recipient's Address]

**Subject: Urgent Memorial Safety Notice – Datchet Cemetery, Ditton Road**

**Grave Space: [GRAVE SPACE NUMBER]**

Dear [Recipient's Name],

As part of Datchet Parish Council's ongoing Memorial Safety Programme, we have recently conducted safety inspections at Datchet Cemetery on Ditton Road. These inspections are carried out to ensure the safety of all visitors and staff, and it is never our intention to cause distress or inconvenience.

While the council is responsible for maintaining general safety within the cemetery, the owner of a memorial holds responsibility for its upkeep and condition.

During our recent inspection, it was noted that the memorial on grave space **[GRAVE SPACE NUMBER]**, for which you hold the Exclusive Right of Burial, is **unstable** and in need of immediate remedial work. A temporary support and notice have been placed on your memorial in order to protect it and ensure the safety of anyone visiting the area.

To address this issue, please arrange for a NAMM or BRAMM-registered monumental mason to carry out the necessary repairs **within 12 weeks** from the date of this letter. A list of local, registered masons is available at the Council Offices.

We kindly ask that you contact the Council Offices on 01753 773499 or via email at [clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk) to confirm your planned course of action.

### Important Information:

- All repairs must be carried out by a registered monumental mason in accordance with BS8415 safety standards.
- A guarantee of conformity must be provided to the council upon completion of the work.

We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions about the Memorial Safety Programme or require further guidance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

**Mrs. Sonia Masikito**  
Clerk to the Council



## Appendix 6

[Date]

[Recipient's Name]

[Recipient's Address]

**Subject: Urgent Memorial Safety Notice – Datchet Cemetery, Ditton Road**  
**Grave Space: [GRAVE SPACE NUMBER]**

Dear [Recipient's Name],

As part of Datchet Parish Council's ongoing Memorial Safety Programme, we have recently conducted safety inspections at Datchet Cemetery on Ditton Road. These inspections are carried out to ensure the safety of all visitors and staff, and it is never our intention to cause distress or inconvenience.

While the council is responsible for maintaining general safety within the cemetery, the owner of a memorial holds responsibility for its upkeep and condition.

During our recent inspection, it was noted that the memorial on grave space **[GRAVE SPACE NUMBER]**, for which you hold the Exclusive Right of Burial, is **extremely unstable** and requires urgent remedial work. Due to the immediate safety risk, a notice has been placed on your memorial, and it has been carefully laid down to prevent potential harm to visitors or damage to the memorial itself.

To address this issue, please arrange for a NAMM or BRAMM-registered monumental mason to carry out the necessary repairs **within 12 weeks** from the date of this letter. A list of local, registered masons is available at the Council Offices.

We kindly ask that you contact the Council Offices on 01753 773499 or via email at [clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk) to confirm your planned course of action.

### Important Information:

- All repairs must be carried out by a registered monumental mason in accordance with BS8415 safety standards.
- A guarantee of conformity must be provided to the council upon completion of the work.

We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions about the Memorial Safety Programme or require further guidance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

**Mrs. Sonia Masikito**  
Clerk to the Council



## Appendix 7

### MEMORIAL SAFETY - Frequently Asked Questions

#### Why Are Memorial/Headstone Safety Checks Being Carried Out?

Memorial safety inspections are essential to ensure that our cemetery remains a safe place for both visitors and employees. Unfortunately, in recent years, there have been incidents across the country where unstable memorials have collapsed, causing serious injuries and fatalities, including to children.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which oversees workplace safety in the UK, has issued guidance requiring local authorities to have policies and procedures in place to ensure the stability of memorials. As part of its duty of care, Datchet Parish Council is responsible for maintaining a safe environment within the cemetery.

#### Who Is Responsible for Maintaining a Memorial?

The **holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial** is responsible for ensuring that the memorial remains in a safe condition. However, the council has a duty to maintain safety within the cemetery. If a memorial is found to be unstable, a warning notice will be attached, and the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial will be contacted to arrange repairs with a qualified, registered monumental mason.

#### What Happens During a Safety Inspection?

- A visual assessment is carried out to check the condition of the memorial.
- A gentle push test is performed to assess its stability.
- The results are recorded for reference.
- Inspections are conducted by council officers or approved contractors.

#### What Happens If a Memorial Fails the Test?

If a memorial is deemed unsafe, the council is required to take immediate action. Depending on the level of risk:

- A warning notice may be applied, and temporary support may be installed.
- If the memorial poses a high-risk hazard, it may be carefully laid flat for safety.

In both cases, the council will contact the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial to arrange a permanent repair.

#### Why Was I Not Contacted Before a Safety Notice or Support Was Applied?

Our priority is to make the cemetery safe as soon as an unstable memorial is identified. After the inspection, we will write to the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial using the contact details on record. If you have not received a notification, we may not have your current address. Please contact us at **01753773499** or [clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk) to update your details.

#### Will My Memorial Be Tested Again in the Future?

Yes. The council will conduct these safety inspections at regular intervals, with all memorials being checked at least once every **five years**.