



Information concerning the  
acquisition and maintenance  
of cemeteries by Parish Councils  
(As supplied by the Association of  
Burial Authorities.)

Foreword by HDC

Investigation has shown that the provision of burial facilities was discussed in 1982 following approaches from several parishes advising that their respective churchyards had no grave spaces. The power to provide cemeteries is exercisable by Parish Councils and Meetings as well as the District Council and parishes were advised that the District Council had no provision in estimates for the establishment of further cemeteries. Council Minute 165 (which has not been superseded) records the recommendation that:

- "(i) general advice, together with specific advice where staff resources allow, be given to Parish Councils in relation to the setting up of burial grounds; and
- (ii) no financial commitment be made by the District Council towards establishing further burial grounds in the District".

However, the Association of Burial Authorities has produced the following fact sheet covering the provision of cemeteries which it was hoped would prove helpful to those Parishes currently investigating the possibility of providing additional cemetery space.



## ACQUIRING A CEMETERY CHECKLIST

1. **Health and Safety:** inspect for hazards such as stability of lawn memorials, monuments, vaults, mausoleums, areas of subsidence. Look to condition of walls, fences, gates, trees, paths and road surfaces. Check plans for drains, water pipes etc - are these shown? (See 14 below).
2. **Contracts:** check for grave/memorial maintenance contracts which may have to be honoured; plots reserved - by faculty in consecrated areas or by contract; possible freeholds of plots or monuments; period of tenancy agreements (99 or 75 years or other periods); grave rights records; war graves maintenance.
3. **Value of monuments:** assess presence of and responsibility for memorials with historical, general or local interest, aesthetic or geological value. Any monuments with a Listed Buildings Status (if there are a good number this may result in the whole cemetery in curtilage, being listed). Existence of any records of monuments and inscriptions.
4. **Flora and Fauna:** presence and special interest value of plants, lichens, animals, insects, protected species, protected trees (which may damage memorials). Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
5. **Environmental:** proximity of waterways, underground water sources, condition of drainage and utilities, conservation areas.
6. **Consecrated areas,** C of E, RC, other religious/cultural reservations and responsibilities, children and stillborn memorial sections and interests of support groups or charities, public rights of way.
7. **After cremation** commemoration, facilities for: possible utilisation of vacant areas, perimeters, paths for after cremation interment in areas unsuitable for inhumation. But consider protection of architectural or historic values.
8. **Location of plots** for future inhumation, potential reuse of unoccupied depth, possibility for recycling, space for plots in unused access areas etc. Check accuracy of plans and other records, manual or computer storage, condition of record books.
9. **Viability:** it is advisable to charge sensibly for space to provide a fund for care and maintenance and structural planting and services, so adding value to the site and attracting sensible prices. Check if records of purchasers are available and up to date. Is renewal of deeds grants an option? A good well-run cemetery need not be run at a loss.
10. **Public graves:** scope and condition of common or public graves.
11. **Security** of perimeter bounds, their quality and condition, responsibility for locking gates, incidence of vandalism, misuse etc.
12. **Buildings** on the site should be used for some useful purpose, not left derelict. Check for listed or consecrated buildings. Toilets, water points and shelters, health and safety requirements.
13. **Community Relations:** check relationships with Friends of Cemeteries Organisations in case of any outstanding matters or to establish support group and link with community. Get local press on your side to avoid negative publicity by stressing positive attributes of the takeover.
14. **A building surveyor's** report is needed for any buildings including mausoleums and large monuments. A restoration and maintenance programme should be drawn up providing a phased plan to carry out works over a period of years and the buildings inspected annually. Check local bylaws for restrictions.

(ABA Informative 10/10/96)





## PLANNING OR EXTENDING A CEMETERY OR CHURCHYARD

The ABA offers a complete design/ planning and, if required, project management service. Where necessary we enlist the professional assistance of landscape architects, structural engineers or other professionals who specialise in this subject and with whom we have a longstanding relationship. Our experience of architects contacting us for advice confirms that few practitioners have experience this field.

We believe each cemetery or churchyard should be viewed as an individual personality with attributes that may be enhanced. And of course every community has its own special interests and objectives. This makes a site visit and consultation essential before making suggestions. To Members the ABA's fee for such consultancy and producing an outline report and proposals is £40 an hour, plus travel expenses. The fee would be refunded should you retain our services for Project Management.

### Financial viability

We are often asked to seek ways to generate income and have particular expertise in this subject. It is becoming quite feasible to operate cemeteries at a profit, and certainly not necessary to incur a loss as is generally the case in the UK.

There is a growing interest in the introduction of Woodland or 'green' Cemeteries. Please heed a word of caution about this. Such developments are a trendy new idea and need careful consideration.

### Books of Reference

The ABA / Zurich Municipal Guide to Management of Safety in Burial Grounds published by the ABA, A4 Ring Binder £85 + £5p&p (£75 for ABA Members) from Loss Control Services, Zurich Municipal, Southwood Crescent, Farnborough, Hants, GU14 0NJ

Davies Law of Burial and Exhumation - sixth edition edited by David Smale published by Shaw & Sons ISBN 0 7219 0064 X Paperback £29.95

The Daily Telegraph Lifeplanner Guide to Funerals and Bereavement by Sam Weller Published by Kogan Page ISBN 0 7494 3057 5 Paperback £9.99

The Churchyards Handbook Published for the Council for the Care of Churchyards by Church House Publishing, Church House Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ ISBN 0 7151 7583 1 Paperback £10.95

The Management of Old Cemetery Land. Authors Ms J. Dunk and Dr J. Rugg published by Shaw & Co ISBN 0 7219 1370 9 Paperback £19.95

Reusing Old Graves - a report on Popular British Attitude by Douglas Davies and Alastair Shaw Published by Shaw & Sons ISBN 0 7219 1470 5 Paperback £24.95

Monumental Matters (design and landscape planning for burial & remembrance) edited by Sam Weller for the Memorial Advisory Bureau, 155 Upper Street, London N1 1RA (2 vols £7.50 + 45p. p&p)

Landscape Design, Journal of the Landscape Institute October 1989 edition; No 184