

Brighton & Hove City Cemeteries

Information for
Owners of Grave Rights



Brighton & Hove
City Council

Introduction

Brighton & Hove City Council wishes to maintain a high standard of upkeep and maintenance in all Council-owned cemeteries and to the graves in its care. We need the help and co-operation of owners of grave rights to help achieve this.

The following information is provided to assist both the Council and grave owners in ensuring that the cemeteries and individual graves are kept to a high level of maintenance and also to explain about other matters relating to the cemeteries, graves and memorials.

Owning grave rights

When the Exclusive Right of Burial to a grave space has been purchased, then a Grant of Deed of Ownership will be issued as confirmation. The lease will last for 50 years from the date shown on the grant. Some of the older grants have longer leases so you will need to check the wording on the document. At the end of this period, there is an opportunity to extend the lease for a further 25 years. Please keep the Deed of Ownership safe as it is evidence of ownership to the right of burial.

Only the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial can authorise any further burials in the grave, or alternatively have the right to be interred in the grave space provided there is sufficient depth remaining. It is important to note that the 'right' has been bought and not the land itself, which remains the property of Brighton & Hove City Council. The ownership to grave rights can only be passed to other people by a legal process. The Cemeteries Officers would be pleased to give advice on the various methods of legally transferring grave rights. A fee for preparing the appropriate documents is payable, in accordance with the published scale of charges.

Memorials

If a memorial is to be placed on the grave, or alterations are to be made to an existing memorial (such as adding new wording), then authority from the council will be required before any works can proceed.

The stonemason erecting or changing the memorial will be required to complete a Memorial Permit Application form, which needs to be signed by the grave owner. Application forms are available from the stonemasons. A list of authorised stonemasons can be found on the website.

Memorial safety

The owner of the rights to a grave is also responsible for the safety and upkeep of the memorial on the grave. If it becomes loose, leans or appear to be unsafe, please contact a memorial mason as soon as possible. The cemeteries staff will contact the grave owner if a problem is detected, and the Council has authority to make the memorial safe, by dismantling it, if no other arrangements have been made. The Council are not responsible for any damage to any memorials which are placed in the cemeteries at the owner's risk.

Management procedure

When a burial takes place, the Council will need to excavate the soil and chalk. Protective materials and boards may be placed over the adjacent graves, and this may prevent access for a short period. This will only be done if they cannot be placed elsewhere. After the funeral, the gravediggers will clean the grave and tidy the surrounding area as soon as practically possible.

Please be aware that the cemeteries are working cemeteries and that heavy machinery will be in operation. You must take special care for your personal safety when visiting a grave and digging is taking place nearby. Also be aware that when a grave near yours is being dug, there is the possibility that the machinery will be

placed over your grave. We make all attempts to ensure that your grave is protected during this process and any coffin below will be undisturbed.

Immediately after the burial, the grave will be filled with a mound of soil. After time and exposure to the elements the earth will subside, but the grounds maintenance staff will top it up with soil and grass-seed when weather conditions are favourable.

Flowers and wreaths placed on a grave after a burial has taken place will be taken away within 14 days. This is to help keep the grave tidy and to enable our staff to make good any subsidence following the burial.

Lawn Memorial Cemetery

The only permitted memorials are natural stone tablets measuring 22 inches by 20 inches laid level with the ground. The tablets may have an integral metal container for flowers. Any ceramic photograph should be flush or below the surface of the tablet. Planting flowers or placing gravel/shingle on any part of the grave is prohibited, other than annual bedding plants at the head.

Hove Cemetery

The only permitted memorials in the new section are headstones no bigger than 2ft 6inches in height x 2ft 6inches in width x 1ft 6inches in depth. Placing gravel/shingle on any part of the grave is prohibited. Flowers may only be planted or put at the head of the grave.

Woodland Valley Natural Burial Ground

This has been designed to create a natural meadow and woodland for those wanting a more environmentally friendly means of burial rather than a neat grave with traditional headstone. We have been working with experts such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust to ensure the cemetery is managed for the benefit of the flora and fauna of the site. With this in mind, no memorials on graves are permitted other than an oak wooden plaque (available to order from Woodvale Lodge), and no flowers planted other than native chalk land wildflowers.

Placing items

Authorised lightweight items such as temporary grave markers that have not been securely fixed onto the grave space are liable to be moved from the grave, due to the weather or other external forces beyond the Council's control. It may not be possible for staff to know the original location of the items and they will be disposed of, without notice as they could become a hazard or interfere with the maintenance of the cemetery.

The grave owner or any person responsible for placing plants, flowers or wreaths on the grave space needs to be aware that all cemeteries are open to the public and this, together with the elements and any wildlife that inhabit the grounds, should be taken into account when placing such items.

Although artificial flowers are permitted in the cemeteries, except the Woodland Burial Ground, they can quickly look unkempt and neglected. Please change them regularly and ensure they are kept secure inside stone vases. Flowers that are merely placed on the grave can cause serious problems if they get caught inside the cutters of mowing machines. Where plastic items are placed on graves, we may need to restrict maintenance in order to protect staff.

Unauthorised items

The cemetery rules and regulations must be adhered to at all times if we are to make the grounds safe for staff and visitors, as well as maintaining the burial grounds to the highest standard possible.

Therefore any items which are not permitted in accordance with the cemetery regulations, must only be provided as a temporary measure and will eventually be removed by the Council. Regretfully, the Council cannot accept any responsibility for missing items or any damage.

Wind-chimes and plastic windmills are sometimes placed on graves, and these items make a noise and disturb mourners and tend to be blown over in strong winds. Visitors are, therefore, respectfully requested not to place them in the cemeteries.

Grass cutting

All lawn graves are designed to be neatly mown and most people choose them for this reason. The grounds maintenance staff find it difficult, and sometimes necessary, to restrict mowing on lawn graves when things that are not permitted such as shrubs, bedding plants, pot plants, glass items, plastic items, windmill, wind-chimes, solar lights, etc have been placed on the full length of the grave.

When items are placed on the grass, the maintenance staff may need to remove them because of the risk of causing damage or the danger of glass or plastic breaking into fragments.

Parts of the cemeteries are left unmown during certain times of the year. This is in line with the Council policy of encouraging wildflowers and pollinating insects.

Stone chippings

Stone chippings must not be placed on or around graves, as several members of the grounds maintenance staff have received injuries whilst using mowing equipment. Small stones can get caught in the

blades or strimmer line and cause personal injury to the member of staff. In the event of personal injury, the person responsible for placing the unauthorised chippings may be liable. Stone chippings are only acceptable when contained by kerb-stones and covering the grave top and only within the traditional grave sections of the cemeteries.

Spring Conditions

The increasing temperatures and rainfall of spring time generally result in rapid growth of grass and weeds across all of the Brighton and Hove cemeteries. Whilst grounds staff attempt to keep vegetation at suitable levels, the weather conditions and the widespread nature of the eight Brighton and Hove cemeteries mean that it is impossible for this to be constantly so. Please be aware that long grass may conceal uneven ground and other trip hazards. Anyone experiencing issues in visiting a particular grave due to long grass should call Woodvale Lodge to arrange for a path to be cleared.

Winter conditions

During very cold periods, glass vases on graves freeze and split, with the shards becoming a safety hazard. Therefore please do not use glass on graves. Water that does not drain properly in the bottom of vases will freeze and can split any type of stone.

The cemeteries are open every day of the year, except in hazardous conditions. Only the roadways, pathways to imminent funerals and areas surrounding the service chapels are gritted, all other areas may not be gritted and are therefore potentially hazardous. Visits should be avoided when conditions may result in a fall or other form of injury, and be aware that laying snow will conceal uneven ground and other trip hazards.

Christmas wreaths

At Christmas, many wreaths are placed on graves. They will be allowed to remain for up to 3 weeks after Christmas and then removed.

Theft and vandalism

Occasionally, expensive fresh flowers, silk flower arrangements or pot plants are stolen or removed and placed on other graves, which is always sad and regrettable.

Problems of theft reported to us will be monitored and the police advised, if appropriate, as the council cannot be held responsible.

Vandalism is even rarer, but when it occurs it is very distressing. It is always advisable to get advice from the stonemason regarding insurance against damages to a memorial.

Children

For their own safety, children under 12 years old are not permitted into the cemetery unless they are in the care of a responsible adult. Children must not be allowed to climb trees or memorials and care must be taken to ensure that they do not disturb other visitors.

Dogs

Dogs are not permitted in the cemeteries, with the exception of assistance dogs.

Please address all enquiries to:
The Woodvale Lodge
Lewes Road
Brighton BN2 3QB

Telephone: (01273) 604020
Email: woodvale@brighton-hove.gov.uk
www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/woodvale