

ECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

**CEMETERY and CHURCHYARD
MANAGEMENT
and POLICIES**

SEPTEMBER 2016

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1. INTRODUCTION

Eckington Parish Council currently has the responsibility for the maintenance of the cemetery in Pershore Road and the churchyard at Holy Trinity Church.

This document supersedes the first "Cemetery and Churchyard Maintenance, and Policies" which was adopted by the Parish Council in 2008.

2. BACKGROUND

In 1897 it was recognised that there was little space left for burials in the churchyard and so the Parish Council purchased a plot of land in Pershore Road in order to provide a cemetery. Fences and walls were erected around the perimeter of the site, a lych-gate was built, trees planted and paths constructed. On the 11th November 1902 the Bishop of Worcester consecrated the cemetery and the first burial took place on 23rd December 1902.

To administer the cemetery a Burial Board was formed under the auspices of the Parish Council. In more recent times the Parish Council decided to discontinue the Burial Board and incorporate all matters relating to the cemetery and churchyard into the main council business.

With the introduction of the cemetery in 1902, burials ceased in the churchyard and it officially became a "Closed Churchyard". Wychavon District Council, under Section 215 of The Local Government Act 1972, became responsible for the maintenance of the churchyard once they had been requested to intervene by Eckington Parochial Church Council. Unfortunately, irregularity of grass cuts and the general poor standard of maintenance led to complaints by parishioners and so in 1990 the Parish Council applied to take on the maintenance responsibility. It was felt that not only could the Parish Council provide better maintenance standards but also reduce costs. Because of an administrative error, it was not until 1998 that a formal agreement was made between Wychavon and Eckington Parish Council, even though the Parish Council had been undertaking the maintenance for the previous eight years.

3. THE CEMETERY

An accurate survey of the cemetery was carried out in 2014. This was deemed necessary as the old plans were schematic and as such did not accurately record the correct position of graves. This was making it difficult for Undertakers to identify the precise location of vacant plots when required. (Note: There is duty under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977: Article 9; to maintain plans which clearly show and allocate numbers to graves)

Since 2008, 20 burial plots have been given over to a "Garden of Remembrance". This was due to the "Garden of Remembrance" by the Church Tower in the Churchyard becoming full. A further 18 burial plots have been lost to the presence of tree roots from the large mature trees around the perimeter of the Cemetery.

The cemetery is laid out in eight blocks referenced A to H, plus there is an area of un-consecrated ground. (See plan in Appendix 1) With the changes that have taken place, there is now a revised total of 858 burial plots in the consecrated ground, 673 of which are occupied, 13 have been purchased for future burials, leaving 172 burial plots currently vacant. In the un-consecrated area there are 132 burial plots of which 114 are currently vacant.

Approximately 250 of those interred in graves are identified by headstones, crosses, kerbstones or vases. Some 63% of graves, therefore, have no memorial stones.

An annual safety check is carried out on all the headstones crosses etc. by the Parish Council. There are also four War Graves that that are inspected and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Apart from the memorial stones, there are a number of other features in the cemetery that require regular inspection and maintenance. There is an iron railing fence on the boundary of three sides of the cemetery with a stone wall on the west side abutting the public highway. On the west side, at the entrance to the cemetery, there is a lych-gate. On the west, south and eastern boundaries are a number of well established trees, whilst through the centre of cemetery runs a tarmac path.

4. THE CHURCHYARD

There are 117 memorial stones in the churchyard of which at least eight date from the eighteenth century but with the majority being from the nineteenth century. Many stones are now so weathered that it is not possible to decipher the inscriptions on them. The public footpath through the churchyard divides the cemetery into two plots, with the memorials on the north side being referred to as Plot A and those to the south, Plot B. (See plan in Appendix 2)

Near to the Church Tower there is a Garden of Remembrance, now closed, that contains a considerable number of small flatly laid stones.

There is a stone wall on the western boundary and a dilapidated dry stone wall on the northern boundary. Ownership of this wall has not been determined. On the southern and eastern boundaries stand iron railing fences and which in all probability belong of the churchyard.

There are a number of elderly Cedar trees around the edges of the cemetery, with a Tree Preservation Order having been placed on one adjacent to the highway at the front of the church. This particular tree forms an important part in the streetscape of Church Street.

5. MAINTENANCE OF THE CEMETERY AND CHURCHYARD

The Parish Council have a responsibility to ensure that the cemetery and churchyard are safe for those working in them and for members of the public when visiting. In order to meet with these requirements it is necessary for the Parish Council to formally adopt the following management policies.

5.1 MEMORIAL STONES

5.1.1. Design and Installation

During the safety inspections that have been carried out in recent years, it has been discovered that some of the most recently installed upright memorial stones were unstable. To ensure that this trend does not continue it is essential that any new memorials conform to national standards of design and installation.

Policy 1

All new memorial stones should be supplied and installed in accordance with *BS 8415:2005+A2 2012* and to the *NAMM Code of Business Practice*.

5.1.2 Safety Inspections

A schedule of all memorial stones, for both the cemetery and the churchyard, has been prepared. Each memorial shall be inspected visually and an assessment made, taking into consideration the following.

- Are joints good?
- Are there cracks present?
- Are any kerbsetts breaking apart?
- Is the memorial leaning?
- Is vegetation affecting it?

Following the visual inspection, a hand test shall be carried out, providing it seems safe to do so. This is to check the stability of the memorial stone. Should any of the memorials have been 2.5 metres or more in height then it may have been necessary to involve a

structural engineer, but all of the memorials are below two metres in height.

Whilst the inspection is being carried out, if it should be determined that any of the memorials present an immediate safety hazard, then action shall be taken as soon as is practically possible to make the area safe.

When the safety inspection is complete, the schedules shall be signed by the two people carrying out the inspection and at the following Parish Council meeting a report on the findings should be made.

Policy 2

A safety inspection of all memorial stones shall be carried out annually. Two people shall be appointed by the Parish Council to attend to this inspection.

5.2 TREES

- 5.2.1.** There are several mature/elderly trees in both the cemetery and the churchyard. They have all been regularly inspected by qualified arboriculturists in recent years and any identified maintenance works have been attended to.

The trees in the churchyard lie within a Conservation Area and therefore the District Council would need to be consulted on any proposed maintenance work. Trees in the Churchyard are not within the Conservation Area and therefore the District Council do not need to be consulted on any trees works there.

The Cedar tree on the western boundary of the churchyard, adjacent to Church Street, has a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on it.

Policy 3

All trees in the cemetery and churchyard shall be inspected every four years by a qualified arboriculturist and a report of the findings and recommendations be presented to the Parish Council.

5.3 BOUNDARY FENCES

- 5.3.1 Both the cemetery and churchyard have considerable lengths of aging iron railings. In 2000, major repairs were carried out to the railings in the cemetery but no maintenance work has been carried out to the railings in the churchyard that is known of.

5.4 BOUNDARY WALLS

- 5.4.1 The cemetery has a stone wall on its western boundary. The coping stones are weathered and in the 1980's cement was applied to the tops of these stones for safety and ascetic reasons. Ivy and other vegetation tends to appear on the faces of the wall and this needs to be kept in check to prevent long-term damage.

5.5 LYCH-GATE

- 5.5.1 The lych-gate was built in 1902 and has a stone base, timber framing and is topped off with a slate roof. It stands close to trees and occasionally small branches drop onto the roof and damage tiles.

The lych-gate also contains double wooden gates. Following the theft of the original gates, new ones were presented to the Parish Council by a village family, in memory of their daughter.

5.6 SEATS

- 5.6.1 There are currently three bench seats within the cemetery, provided by families of the deceased. There is also a bench outside the cemetery wall but its origins are unknown.
There are currently four bench seats within the churchyard, but as they require faculties to be installed they are regarded as being the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council.

Policy 4

Requests from families to provide Memorial seats or benches at the cemetery will be considered by the Parish Council provided they meet the following criteria:

- (i) The proposed location is suitable**

- (ii) The seat or bench design is appropriate**
- (iii) The donor is responsible for any maintenance required to keep the seat or bench in a safe condition.**
- (iv) Should at any time the Parish Council become aware of the seat being unsafe then the donor will be notified. The Parish Council reserve the right to remove the seat if remedial works are not carried out in a reasonable period of time.**
- (v) Should the donor wish the Parish Council to provide insurance cover for any such seats or benches against theft or damage, then a fee will be payable.**

5.7 PATHS

- 5.7.1 The cemetery contains a tarmac footpath running west to east through the centre. This is now deteriorating and will need to be resurfaced in the not too distant future. The path was last tarmacked in January 1974.

There are a number of grass paths throughout the cemetery but they are not easily distinguishable. It is in the grass cutting contract that the grass paths should receive a shorter cut than the rest of the cemetery.

There is also a tarmac footpath running through the churchyard but this is a public right of way and therefore maintenance is the responsibility of the County Council.

Policy 5

An annual safety inspection shall be carried out of the lych-gate, seats, paths, fences and walls. Two people shall be appointed by the Parish Council to attend to this inspection.

5.7 GRASS CUTTING

- 5.7.1 Both the cemetery and churchyard have large areas of grass to maintain. A contract to maintain the grass areas is put out to tender every three years.

Policy 6

In order to maintain a high standard of maintenance a contract to cut the grass in the cemetery and churchyard shall be put out to tender every three years.

5.8 BURIAL FEES

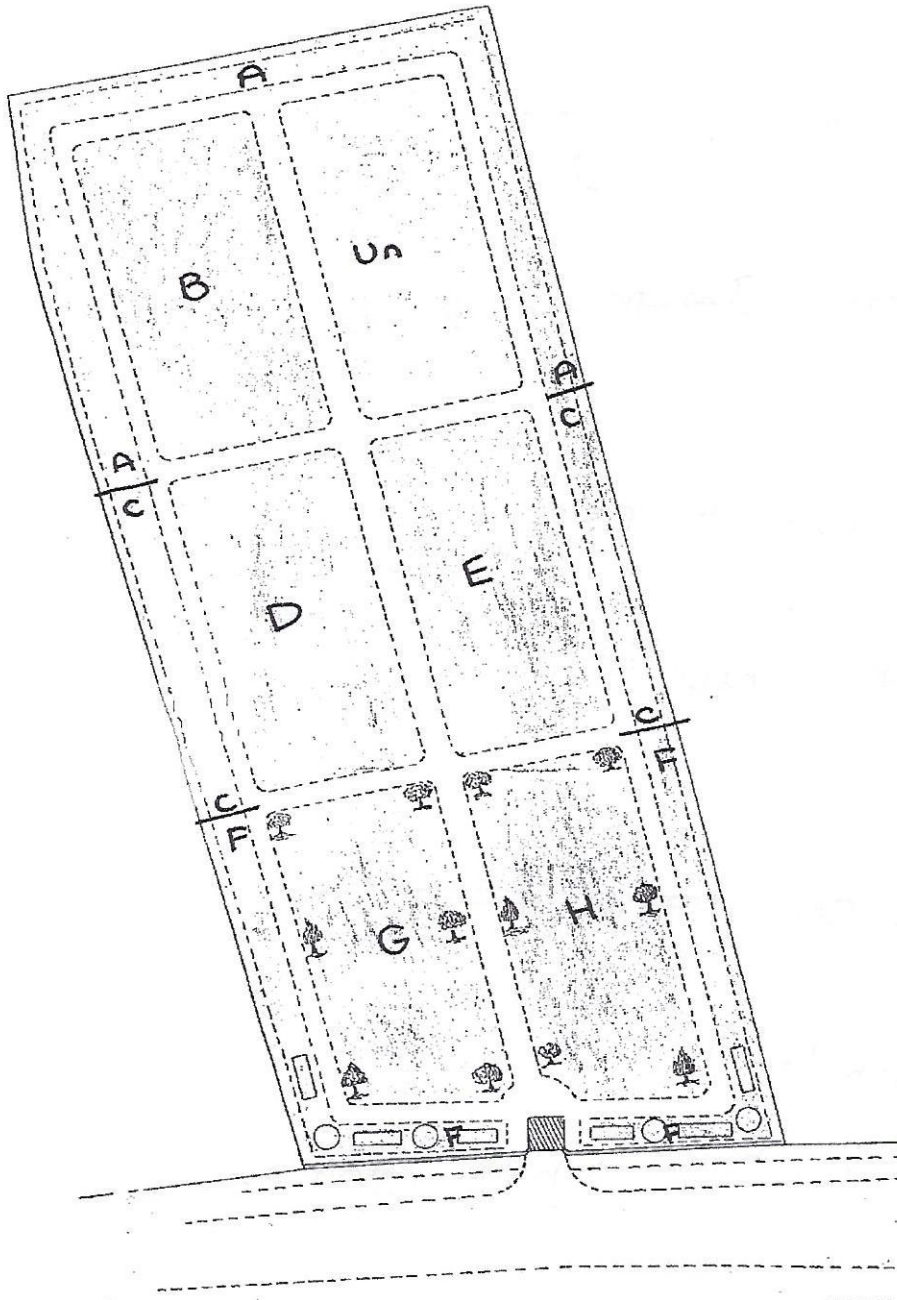
- 5.8.1 The Parish Council operate a scale of charges for burials, internments, installing headstones and the like. (See Appendix 4) It is incumbent upon the Parish Council to keep these charges at a realistic level and they should be reviewed at frequent intervals.

Policy 7

A review of the burial fees shall be carried out each November, in order they may be agreed and minuted and so that any new charges can be implemented from the first of January following.

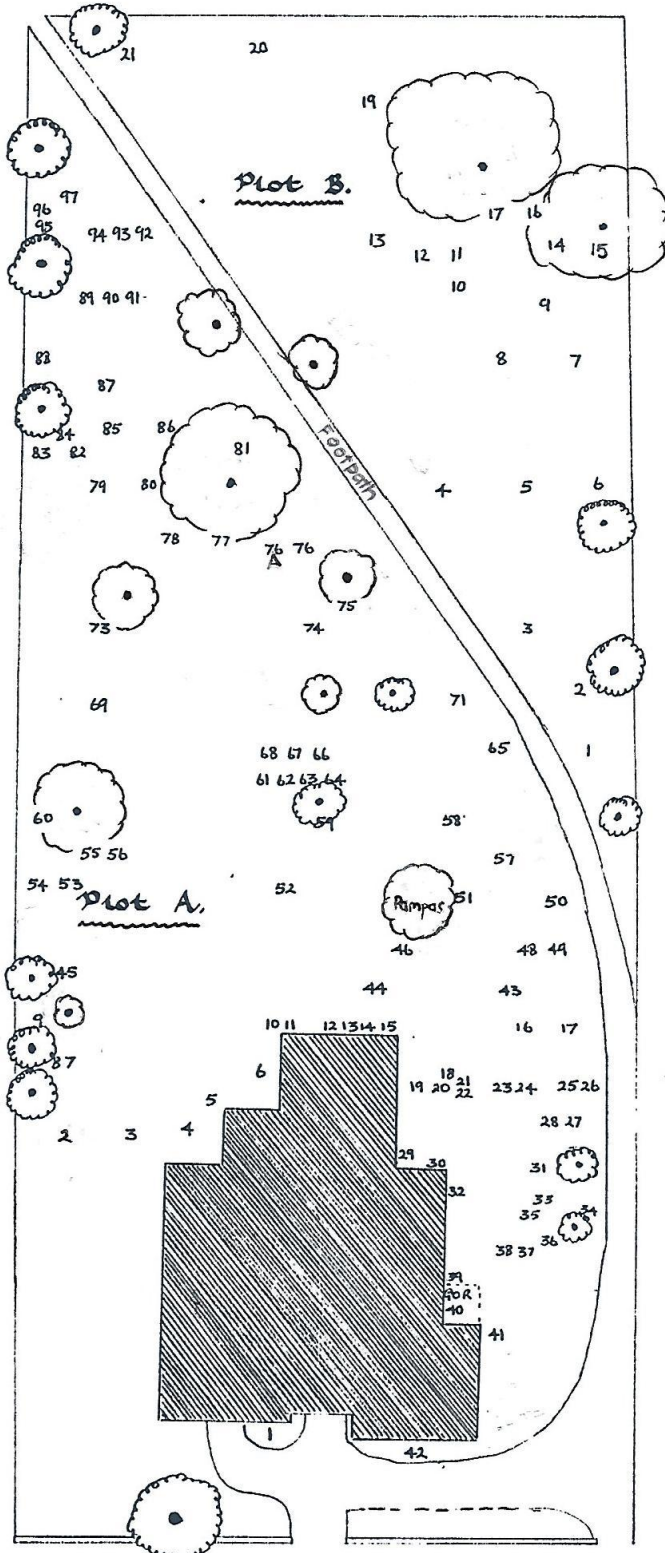
Appendix 1

Plan of Cemetery



Appendix 2

Plan of Churchyard



Appendix 3

Cemetery – Burial Plot Survey

Block	Original No.Plots	Added Plots	Do not Exist	Garden of Rem	Lost to Tree Roots	Revised No.	Burial Plots Purchased	Burial Plots Occupied	Burial Plots Vacant
A	93			10	13	70	0	11	59
B	132					132	5	88	39
C	62	2	3	10		51	2	12	37
D	132					132	1	127	4
E	132	1				133	3	120	10
F	49	14			5	58	2	46	10
G	132	12				144	0	135	9
H	132	8	2			138	0	134	4
					Totals	858	13	673	172
UnCon	132					132	0	18	114

Above Figures as at August 2016

Appendix 4

Cemetery Fees

ECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

BURIAL GROUND, PERSHORE ROAD, ECKINGTON.

FEEs, PAYMENTS SUMS AND CONDITIONS FIXED AND SETTLED
UNDER SECTION 15 OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (CEMETERIES)
ORDER 1977.

NOTE

1. The fees, payments and sums set out below apply where the person to be interred or in respect of whom the right is granted, is or immediately before his death was, an inhabitant or parishioner of the village of Eckington.
2. In all other cases, the fees, payments and sums will be doubled.
3. A former inhabitant or parishioner who has ceased to reside in the parish shall be treated as an inhabitant or parishioner for the purposes of fees for five years after ceasing to reside therein.

Part 1. INTERMENTS

The fees indicated for the various heads of items 1 and 2 exclude the digging of the grave.

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| A | For an interment: | |
| | (i) of the body of a child whose age at the time of death did not exceed 18 years | nil |
| | (ii) of the body of a person whose age at the time of death exceeded 18 years | £147.00 |
| B | For the interment of cremated remains in a grave or vault in respect of which an exclusive right of burial has been granted | £85.00 |

Part 2. EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS OF BURIAL IN EARTHEN GRAVES

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| A | For the exclusive right of burial in an earthen grave 9 feet by 4 feet (2700 x 1200mm) | £165.00 |
|---|--|---------|

- B For the exclusive right of burial of cremated remains in an earthen grave £165.00

Part 3. MONUMENTS, GRAVESTONES, TABLETS AND INSCRIPTIONS

The fees indicated for the various heads of the Part include the first inscription. For each inscription after the first a fee of £70.00 is payable.

For the right to erect or place on a grave or vault:

- | | |
|--|---------|
| (i) A gravestone not exceeding 6 feet x 3 feet (1800 x 900mm) | £147.00 |
| (ii) A kerbstone not exceeding 6ft 6in.x 3 feet (1950 x 900mm) | £231.00 |
| (iii) A double kerbstone not exceeding 6ft 6in. x 7 feet (1950 x 2100) | £415.00 |
| (iv) A memorial stone not exceeding 24in. x 17in x 3in. (600 x 425 x 75mm) | £105.00 |
| (iv) A vase, in place of a memorial stone, to mark the grave | £80.00 |

Part 4. GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

For the exclusive right of burial of cremated remains in an earthen grave, with a flat memorial stone or a small upright headstone.
Area of grave - 2 feet square (600 x 600mm) £85.00

The following conditions apply:

- Flat stones (10 inches x 8 inches) (250 x 200mm)
- Small upright headstones (24in. x 17in. x 3in. thick)(600 x 425 x 75mm), no plinths to be permitted;
- Only bulbs to be planted within the area of the grave; no flowers, artificial flowers or shrubs;
- No urns to be placed above ground.
- No vases

THE ABOVE FEES, PAYMENTS SUMS AND CONDITIONS WERE APPROVED AT A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL ON 08 DECEMBER 2015, TO COME INTO FORCE ON 01ST JANUARY 2016.

15 DECEMBER 2015

Louise Gerber

Appendix 5

Reference Documents:

"BS 8415:2005+A2 2012"

Monuments within Burial Grounds and Memorial Sites – Specification

"NAMM Code of Business Practice"

Published by the National Association of Memorial Masons:

"Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977"

Subject to the provisions of this order, a burial authority may do all such things as they consider necessary or desirable for the proper management, regulation and control of a cemetery

"Guide for Burial Ground Managers"

Published by Department of Constitutional Affairs; 2005

"Local Government Act 1972"

Mechanics of Closed Churchyards (In particular S214 and S215)

"Health and Safety at Work Act 1974"

Ensuring that Tombstones and Monuments do not present a hazard (In particular S2)

"Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991"

Care and maintenance of Closed Churchyards, relating to tree maintenance. (In particular Part II Section 6)

"The Blue Book"

Complying with BS8415:2005+A2:2012

The reference guide for Memorial Masons & Cemetery Personnel
Updated February 2016