



Woodstock Town Council

Rules for using the Cemeteries

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Section 1: General Information

As a Burial Authority, Woodstock Town Council will comply with the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 and other relevant statutory instruments.

The council strives to offer a sensitive and professional service to the residents of Woodstock and their relatives.

The following rules and procedures have been adopted by the council to govern activities within the two cemeteries which it owns and manages. The oldest cemetery is in Hensington Road, the other in Green Lane. The cemeteries are usually open to the public between dawn and dusk every day.

Administration

1. No burial shall take place and no memorial shall be placed or inscription added without the permission of the officer appointed by the authority.
2. A fully completed interment notice and the appropriate disposal certificate must be presented to the administrative staff in the Town Hall (during office opening hours) at least three working days before the proposed day of the interment. This is in order that staff can then allocate the plot and arrange for it to be marked for the grave digger.
3. All fees and charges for interments shall be paid at the time of application and an Exclusive Right of Burial will not be issued by Woodstock Town Council until the funds have cleared.
4. Grave spaces and cremation plots are allocated by town council staff and will usually be allocated in strict numerical order.
5. The next of kin of a family member who is about to be buried in the cemetery can reserve one plot adjacent to the proposed grave if it is available.
6. Proof of ownership is required by production of the grave deed before an interment can take place in a reserved grave space or cremation plot.
7. All funeral directors and grave diggers working in the Woodstock cemeteries must be on the council's approved list. This is to ensure that they have appropriate insurance, have formally agreed to comply with the council's rules and have undertaken a risk assessment. They will then enter into a formal agreement with the council.
8. Masons working in the Woodstock cemeteries must be on the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) or on The Register of Qualified Fixers (operated by NAMM) to ensure that

acceptable standards of fixing are maintained. All memorials must be erected in accordance with BS8415 (latest version). The BRAMM Blue Book and the National Association of Memorial Mason's code of working practice inform masons on how to comply with BS8415.

9. A trained grave digger shall be employed to excavate all graves. This is to ensure that they are dug centrally within the respective grave space to the correct dimensions, adequately shored, properly backfilled following the interment and that turf is then laid to provide a level surface suitable for mowing.
10. All allocated plots in the Green Lane Cemetery will be marked. Reservation markers will show plots that have been reserved and 'Rest in Peace' markers will mark occupied graves that have no other memorial or marker. Council grave markers shall only be removed by town council representative.
11. A plan of the burial ground showing the position of every grave is kept at the town hall and may be inspected by arrangement without charge. A register of burials is kept at the town hall and searches may be made by arrangement and certified extracts obtained. A fee may be charged for this when an officer of the council conducts a register search on behalf of an enquirer.

Legal Considerations

12. No funerals can take place until an appropriate disposal certificate has been received by Woodstock Town Council.
13. The Council may grant Exclusive Rights of Burial (ERB's) for a period of 75 years to residents or others with strong Woodstock connections. These are legal agreements between the burial authority and the purchaser of the ERB for a grave or cremation plot.
14. Families can purchase an ERB for one reserved plot to secure a grave space adjacent to a close relative already buried (if a plot is available). This ERB
 - 15.1 shall extend for 75 years from the date of purchase; and
 - 15.2 may only be transferred with the prior written consent of the owner of the ERB and at the expense of the applicant. Where the owner is deceased the executor or nearest relative(s) should contact the council to arrange a transfer of ownership.
16. After interment no human remains can be moved or removed without the faculty and/or licence required by law being produced to the town clerk.
17. It is a legal requirement that all excavation work should be carried out in accordance with The Construction Regulations 1996 regulation 12.

This means that all graves being dug for the interment of bodies must be shored.

- 18 Section 18 (1) of The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 states that no person shall-
- a) wilfully create any disturbance in a cemetery
 - b) commit any nuisance in a cemetery
 - c) wilfully interfere with any burial taking place in a cemetery
 - d) wilfully interfere with any grave or vault, any tombstone or other memorial, or any flowers or plants on any such matter, or
 - e) play at any game or sport in a cemetery.

General Conditions Concerning Interments

- 19 Only graves of single depth are permitted in the original Green Lane Cemetery due to Environment Agency considerations. Cremation plots can accommodate multiple ashes (up to three caskets) if this is requested on purchase of the plot. The Hensington Road Cemetery is full but caskets of ashes can still be interred in existing family plots.
- 20 Interments can only take place between sunrise and one hour before sunset for health and safety reasons.
- 21 Where a funeral procession is likely to cause significant traffic congestion, the town council and Thames Valley Police should be advised in good time so that assistance might be provided and appropriate arrangements made.

The Cemetery Environment

- 22 Visitors should respect the character and purpose of the cemetery and no-one may seek to obstruct, interrupt or delay a funeral.
- 23 Planting trees and shrubs within the cemetery is not allowed and the council reserves the right to take appropriate remedial action as required.
- 24 The general maintenance of the cemeteries is the responsibility of the town council but families are responsible for maintaining their family plots and their memorials.
- 25 Dead flowers and wreaths should be removed by the family and placed in the bins provided for this purpose. In Green Lane these are to the left of the cemetery gates as you leave the cemetery. In Hensington Road these are situated beside the main double gates.
- 26 Graves have to be levelled and kept clear of ornaments in order that the grass can be cut. Therefore, all flower holders or grave

ornaments should be incorporated within the memorial or positioned by the headstone or at the head of the grave if no stone is in place. Glass receptacles are not allowed for health and safety reasons.

- 27 Items that make a noise or move will not usually be permitted in the cemetery as they can upset visitors to the cemetery.
- 28 Any seats or other external furniture in the cemeteries shall be subject to the council's prior consent. Please refer to the separate policy entitled 'Placement of Memorial Seats'.
- 29 Dogs are not allowed in the cemetery unless they are assistance dogs.
- 30 Vehicles should not be parked on the verge or the grass areas of the cemetery ground in Green Lane. Parked vehicles shall not obstruct other vehicles or pedestrians and the turning circle must be kept clear at all times. No unauthorised vehicles are permitted to enter the Hensington Road Cemetery.

Memorials and Monuments

- 31 The right to install a memorial on a grave or cremation plot can to be purchased for a period of 25 years (renewable) on plots where an ERB has already been purchased. Grave owners are advised to inform the council should they change address otherwise a renewal notice will not be received.
- 32 All memorials must be approved by Woodstock Town Council prior to installation.
- 33 The scale, style and wording of monuments in the cemeteries are subject to specific rules (see section 3) and to the council's policy of 9 June 2009 (Minute WTC/52/09):-
style and wording are matters of personal choice by the applicant which the council would not wish to influence unless (a) they do not comply with the council's existing conditions regarding size etc. (see below) and/or (b) they might cause gross offence;
applications shall be dealt with by the town clerk except that any applications which could be deemed to cause gross offence shall be submitted to the council;
- 34 Masons working in the Woodstock cemeteries must be on the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) or on The Register of Qualified Fixers (operated by NAMM) to ensure that acceptable standards of fixing are maintained. All memorials must be erected in accordance with BS8415 (latest version). The BRAMM

Blue Book and the National Association of Memorial Mason's code of working practice inform masons on how to comply with BS8415.

- 35 It is a Health and Safety requirement that memorial are tested periodically to check that they have not become unstable or a danger to cemetery users. If a monument poses a safety risk to the public, the council shall attempt to notify the owner of an Exclusive Right of Burial in order that they can arrange for remedial action as required. The Town Council reserves the right to take reasonable action to mitigate such risk, for example by 'staking' or laying down unstable head-stones, and to charge the responsible families for such works.

Payback of Fees for unused reserved plots

- 36 If a resident who has previously paid to reserve a burial or cremation plot later wishes to relinquish the reserved plot the Council will:
- i) Require proof of their ownership to the right for burial in that plot, e.g. by production of the Exclusive Right of Burial (ERB) certificate.
 - ii) The person who has leased the plot from the Council will complete a Surrender Form.
 - iii) The surrender value will usually be 100% of the original purchase price as specified on the Deed of Grant (ERB) and this will be refunded.
 - iv) If for any reason the amount cannot be confirmed the resident will be refunded 50% of the current cost of an Exclusive Right to Burial upon production of the ERB, evidence of purchase or verification of its issue (to the person applying for the refund) by WTC and completion of a Surrender Form.

Section 2: Information for Funeral Directors and Grave Diggers

General

1. All funeral directors and grave diggers working in the Woodstock Cemeteries must be approved by the council. Woodstock Town Council will maintain a list of approved contractors. In order to be included on the list applicants should contact the Town Clerk at the Town Hall. They will need to enter into a formal agreement with the council, provide a copy of their insurance and indemnities and agree to comply with the risk assessment that has been drawn up by Woodstock Town Council. After which they will be added to the list. Grave diggers must also provide evidence that they have been adequately trained. A certificate from an appropriate grave digging training course should be provided e.g. A City & Guilds qualification from the ICCM Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme (Training tab – COTS). If the grave digger has been working in this industry prior to formal qualifications being available Woodstock Town Council will take references from other burial authorities for whom they work.
2. Funeral directors and/or grave diggers on the approved contractors list will represent Woodstock Town Council at funerals in the council's cemeteries.
3. Funeral directors may sub-contract a grave digger from the approved contractors list.

Grave Digging Requirements

4. Funeral directors and grave diggers must ensure that all funerals are undertaken in a safe environment. They have a duty of care and must comply with the council's rules, current legislation and best practice.
5. Town Hall staff will fix a marker in the centre of the grave which shall not be removed by anyone other than the grave digger. This indicates the position of the grave for the grave digger who will then comply with current legislation when digging the plot.
6. All graves must be carefully dug with due regard to applicable health and safety rules and the sensitivities of other families using the cemetery.
7. Care must be taken not to damage any adjacent grave, memorial or floral tribute.
8. **All graves in Woodstock cemetery must be shored using timber or mechanical hydraulic systems to comply with legal requirements.**

9. The minimum depth for a single depth coffin grave in the Woodstock cemeteries will usually be 5 foot.
10. The standard grave space size will be 8 foot long by 4 foot wide.
11. Staff from Woodstock Town Council will undertake periodic spot checks to confirm that graves are being dug in the correct location and to the correct dimensions, that shoring is been used and that the environment is safe and also sensitive to visitors to the cemetery.
12. Under schedule 2 of The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 no body shall be buried in a grave in such a manner that any part of the coffin is less than 3 feet below the level of any ground adjoining the grave.
13. The grave digger must be mindful of the sensitivities of the site. Sometimes it may be necessary to pile grave excavations on adjacent graves if the new grave is situated amongst a populated area of the cemetery. In such cases, in order to avoid upsetting the relatives of adjacent occupied graves, the new grave should not be dug too far in advance of it being needed.
14. The soil and stone excavated for a grave must be left in a neat pile and covered in green matting. Adjacent graves, turf and memorials must be protected against soiling or damage.
15. The grave digger will backfill the grave after the interment and subsequently laying turf so as to give a level surface suitable for mowing.
16. At least twelve inches of top soil must be used to complete the backfilling of a grave.
17. If any grave or monument in the cemetery is damaged by an agent of Woodstock Town Council or the agents sub-contractors whilst working in the cemetery the agent concerned shall be liable to arrange repairs to a standard approved by the family and cover the costs thereof.

Section 3 Information for Memorial Masons

1. Memorials and monuments may be erected on plots where exclusive rights of burial have been purchased.
2. No memorial may be installed until the memorial has been officially approved by Woodstock Town Council and the appropriate fees have been paid.
3. Masons working in the Woodstock cemeteries must be on the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) or on The Register of Qualified Fixers (operated by NAMM) to ensure that acceptable standards of fixing are maintained. All memorials must be erected in accordance with BS8415 (latest version). The BRAMM Blue Book and the National Association of Memorial Mason's code of working practice inform masons on how to comply with BS8415. (see 8 in section 1 above). The masons must have their own professional and public liability insurance.
4. Before the erection of any memorial a detailed drawing and description showing the size, type and finish of stone or other material to be used, the sizes of dowells and ground anchor and the wording of any inscription, including type and size of lettering, shall be sent to the town clerk, together with the applicable fees, for approval. Any additional inscriptions also require the approval of the town clerk. **No liability will be accepted by the town council for orders placed before approval has been obtained.**
5. The town council must be notified of the proposed removal of a headstone in advance.
6. Headstones must comply with current British Standards (see 8 in section 1) The maximum overall footprint of a headstone or memorial to be placed at the head of a full grave in the Woodstock lawn cemetery (inclusive of foundation stone and plinth) shall not exceed the following dimensions:-
 - a Height: 3 feet (90cm);
 - b Width: 2 feet, 6 inches (75cm);
 - c Thickness: 4 inches (10cm);
 - d Foundation stone: Must comply with the BRAMM Blue Book or NAMM code or working practice.
7. The maximum overall footprint of a headstone or memorial to be placed on a cremation plot in the Woodstock lawn cemetery (inclusive of the foundation stone and plinth) shall not exceed the following dimensions:-

- a Height: 2 feet (60cm);
 - b Width: 1 foot, 6 inches (45cm)
 - c Thickness: 4 inches (10cm)
 - d Foundation stone: Must comply with the BRAMM Blue Book or NAMM code or working practice.
8. The scale, style and wording of monuments in the cemeteries are subject to the council's policy of 9 June 2009 (Minute WTC/52/09):-
- a style and wording are matters of personal choice by the applicant which the council would not wish to influence unless (a) they do not comply with the council's existing conditions regarding size etc. and/or (b) they might cause gross offence;
 - b applications shall be dealt with by the town clerk except that any applications which could be deemed to cause gross offence shall be submitted to the council;
9. Memorials should include the name of the memorial masons in an inconspicuous place such as the back of the stone.
10. If any damage is done to the council's land or premises the cost of repair will be recoverable by the town council from the person responsible.
11. If any grave or monument in the cemetery is damaged by a memorial mason the mason concerned shall be liable to undertake repairs to a standard approved by the family and cover the costs thereof.