

CEMETERY RULES AND THE COUNCIL'S BIODIVERSITY DUTY

**A. Floral Tributes**

To clarify the recent note in the Communication Magazine regarding Floral Oasis/Foam and artificial flowers. The Council understands that coping with the loss of loved ones can be a very challenging task for many, and being able to preserve or honour their memories is tough to manage during a difficult time. Families and friends find considerable solace by honouring their loved ones through decoration of their graves with floral tributes and arrangements that help with that loss, but this has to be managed in a way that meets the Council's duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity and protect the environment. The Cemetery rules, extracts below, have not changed in that the Parish Council reserves the right to remove any item that does not conform to its rules, or in the case of floral tributes if they have become unsightly or a nuisance in the opinion of the parish council. This is done so that the gardens can be maintained and cared for and that their overall appearance is one that visitors find to be pleasant.

**1. Floral Foam/Oasis**

The parish council's legal duty to protect and enhance biodiversity is a statutory requirement and the council is very clear in this respect. The use of floral foam/Oasis will no longer be allowed owing to its unacceptably damaging impact on the environment and wildlife. This is one of the most damaging plastic-related products in current usage and many cemeteries and graveyards have already disallowed this product. Floral foam contains the same amount of plastic as 10 plastic shopping bags. It is non-biodegradable, non-recyclable, and toxic for both humans and animals. The Royal Horticultural Society has banned the use of oasis in all of its garden and horticultural shows since 2021. We would encourage funeral directors and families to use local florists who employ methods that produce beautiful and natural floral arrangements without the use of plastic or floral foam – many of the Christmas wreaths this last year used wooden bases or wire frames and natural foliage instead of oasis and plastics for example. In the short term, any floral displays containing floral foam/Oasis that are brought to the cemetery for a funeral should be removed and taken off the premises by the funeral director or family currently within 4 weeks, or they will be removed by Cemetery staff in accordance with the rules.

**2. Artificial Flowers**

The parish council recognises that for many the use of artificial flowers provides a convenient and cost-effective method of honouring their loved ones. Fresh flowers are not an affordable option for everyone, and many people do not spend their whole lives in the village or are otherwise unable to tend the graves of their loved ones on a regular basis. So, for many people being able to have colourful, vibrant alternatives to fresh flowers is essential to enable them to honour their relationship with and celebrate the life of the deceased. Whilst many do check and replace or refresh their artificial flowers regularly, we also have a large number who place plastic flowers and then don't or can't check on them or remove them for months on end. These items look lovely when first placed on graves but are soon disintegrating and blowing all around. Apart from the mess, these pieces can be dangerous for birds and other small wildlife and the metal underneath the plastic gets chopped up and spit out by the mower which can be dangerous. Many artificial flowers come with a recommendation not to be used outdoors, and if they are not UV protected, they will fade, discolour, and get blown about in high winds if not properly secured.

EXTRACT FROM RULES (full copy available at <https://north-somercotes.parish.lincolnshire.gov.uk/council-business/cemetery>)

## **18. FLORAL TRIBUTES**

(a) All funeral wreaths and flowers will be left on a new grave for a period of not less than four weeks. After the four-week period has elapsed, the wreaths and flowers will be removed if this has not already been done by the family of the deceased. (b) No bushes, shrubs or plants are allowed unless in permitted monumental vases or memorials with incorporated vases. Specially designed memorials with an incorporated planting section will be allowed providing planted with small flowers only. Plastic flowers should be avoided, and will not be permitted in due course, as they deteriorate rapidly in sunlight and pollute the ground with permanent pieces of plastic as they disintegrate. Plastic and other artificial flowers will be removed if, in the opinion of the Parish Council, they become unsightly or to avoid pollution if they are breaking up. (c) The placing of memorials, plants or shrubs will NOT be allowed on those plots used for burial of cremated remains on the outside of the wall of the Garden of Remembrance except those permitted as stated below. (d) The concrete flower holder inside the Garden of Remembrance can be used by those wishing to leave a fresh floral tribute. See rule number 21 - Memorial Vases on spaces used for the burial of cremated remains for the type and size of memorials and vases which are permitted. (e) Plastic domes (containing flowers) and/or Glass vases/any other objects on graves will be removed and the council does not accept any liability for the loss of, or damage to, such items. Christmas wreaths left on the graves in the main cemetery, or inside the gravel border in the Garden of Remembrance, or outside the Garden of Remembrance will be removed usually at the end of February - or before if unsightly in the opinion of the Parish Council.

## **19. PLANTS/SHRUBS, MEMORIALS AND TEMPORARY GRAVE MARKERS**

The planting of plants or shrubs or placing of ornaments, (or any other objects) will not be allowed on any plots within the Cemetery or Garden of Remembrance. In the Garden of Remembrance, only specified size/type of plaques and memorial vases as stated in the rules will be allowed. Vases must not be fixed in place as it would prevent normal maintenance tasks and further interments from being carried out. The Council reserves the right to remove any unauthorised plaque, flower receptacle or miscellaneous items from the graves as it deems necessary, including vases that have been fixed in place. No ornaments should be left permanently along the grave length in the main cemetery or on the paving slabs/gravel in the Garden of Remembrance. Temporary grave markers will be permitted for a maximum of 6 months following burial, after which they will be removed. These should not exceed 5" x 4", inscribed with the name and date of death of the deceased, mounted such that the total height does not exceed 30cm/12". Other temporary small grave markers set into the turf which do not affect maintenance tasks may be permitted, on application to the Clerk.

## **23. FLOWER HOLDERS AND PLAQUES**

Flower holders are available on the grassed area inside the Garden of Remembrance should anyone wish to leave a floral tribute to those whose ashes are scattered on the grass or for those whose ashes are buried on the outside of the Garden of Remembrance wall. Fresh or plastic flowers will be removed if, in the opinion of the Parish Council, they become unsightly. Families may also have memorial plaques erected on the inside of the Garden of Remembrance wall, or on the sloping top of the wall for those buried on the outside. Only a standard sized memorial plaque in copper, brass or other metal is permitted, the dimensions of which must be 25cm x 18cm x 3mm, subject to availability of space. This requires a formal application to the Clerk to ensure the plaque is acceptable and payment of the relevant current fee. It is the responsibility of the deceased person's family to organise and purchase the plaque and deliver this to the Clerk, to be fixed by the Parish Council. Non-standard plaques will not be permitted and plaques which are erected by others or without payment of the required fee will be removed until the correct fee, or evidence of payment, is

received. Plaques are displayed for 20 years in the first instance, but thereafter cannot be guaranteed.

## CEMETERY RULES - THE DISPOSAL OF ASHES, PURCHASE OF PLAQUES AND VASES

### **B. Ashes**

We would like to politely remind people that it is a legal offence to dispose of cremated human remains in the cemetery unless the statutory paperwork has been completed, the Cremation certificate handed in, and the appropriate fees paid. Please also note that plaques and vases are not permitted in the Garden of Remembrance or elsewhere in the Cemetery unless they have been paid for, and under no circumstances should plaques be installed by anyone other than Cemetery staff, once paid for, with special mastic for the lime cement. The Parish Council, and therefore this community, expends considerable money and effort each year to try and keep the cemetery grounds looking neat and well cared for, and recently spent a considerable amount refurbishing the Garden of Remembrance and planting flower bulbs. The fees for plaques and vases, as well as for scattering of ashes and interments all contribute to – but do not fully cover – these ongoing costs. Regrettably, some people seem to think it is ok to ignore these legal requirements and rules, and as well as scattering ashes without paying, someone has now stuck a plaque in the Garden of Remembrance using some inappropriate and unsightly mastic, in an area that we are not using for plaques, and which does not appear to have been paid for. This will be removed, and the parish council takes no responsibility for any damage that may be done to the plaque when doing so. Reimbursement of costs for any repair required to the lime plaster will be sought as appropriate.

EXTRACT FROM RULES:

#### **24. RULES AND REGULATIONS**

A Register of Burials and the Scattering of Ashes will be kept by the Clerk as required by law. Searches may be made, and copies can be obtained. A fee will be charged for such searches and extracts (see current fees). The Council reserves the right, from time to time, to revise the Rules and Regulations and will review the Schedule of fees annually. These Rules and Regulations are made in conformity with, and subject to, the Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 and any amendment thereof.

The Parish Council will exercise its power to remove monuments and other items improperly erected in accordance with these rules, and may therefore take down and remove any gravestone, monument, tablet, plaque, vase or monumental inscription, or any other item which shall have been placed within the cemetery without their written authority.

If you have any questions regarding the suitability of proposed floral tributes or artificial flowers or wish to reclaim other items that have been removed to the store Chapel, please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk. A list of acceptable floral tribute materials that will be permitted in the future is being compiled as part of the Council's required Policy on implementing its Biodiversity Duty, and if there are any florists who are able to provide sustainable/biodegradable floral tributes their details can be published on the Council's website

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