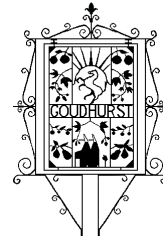


Goudhurst Parish Council



Burial Authority 21.11.23

MEETING
21 November 2023 18:00 GMT

PUBLISHED
16 November 2023

Goudhurst Parish Council



To: Cllrs Edward Hodgskin, Phil Kirkby, Geoff Mason and Mrs Caroline Richards.
Cllr Antony Harris (ex-officio). Rev. Rachel Robertson (advisor).

I summon you to a Meeting of the Burial Authority on Tuesday 21 November 2023, 6.00 pm at St Mary's Church, Goudhurst, where business detailed on this agenda will be discussed.

Goudhurst Parish Council recognise that there are continuing risks associated with COVID-19 and are supportive of individuals wearing masks in meetings and maintaining a social distance. We will continue to provide hand sanitiser at the entrance to the Village Hall. In order to keep everyone safe, please do not attend a meeting if you have COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 5 days. We will continue to review the risks and will comply with any future controls recommended or mandated by HM Government.

Members of the Public and the Press are welcome to attend this meeting. At the Chairman's discretion, 15 minutes will be set aside for questions from members of the public each one of whom may be invited to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes in total relating to items on the Agenda or about issues of local concern. Thereafter they have the right, and are welcome, to stay and observe the rest of the Meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, s1.

Please inform the Clerk if you intend to film or record the Meeting.

Claire Reed
Clerk to Goudhurst Parish Council
14 November 2023

Parish Council Office - The Hop Bine, Ranters Lane, Goudhurst, TN17 1HN
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A quorum for the Burial Authority is 3 Members.

Agenda

Location
St Mary's Church

Date
21 Nov 2023

Time
18:00

	Item	Page
1	Apologies for absence	-
2	Declarations of Interest	-
3	To resolve to approve the minutes of the last meeting held on 04 July 2023.	4
4	To receive questions and statements from the public and press.	-
5	To consider any memorial applications requiring a Committee decision.	-
6	To resolve to recommend the adoption of the new Memorial Management Policy by council.	6
7	To consider the need for Memorial Safety Testing and to decide on an action plan.	-
8	To resolve to approve the new Grass Management Plan for the cemeteries.	9
9	To consider the weed growth in the Victorian Cemetery and Burial Ground and to decide on any action needed.	-
10	To resolve to approve the updated maintenance contracts for the cemeteries.	-
11	To consider and make a decision on the number of plaques to be added to the new memorial bench in the Burial Ground and the fee to be charged.	-
12	To consider and make a decision on the future location of Burial Authority meetings.	-
13	Items for information	-
13.1	Removal of the cypress growing out of a grave in the Victorian Cemetery.	-
14	Next meeting Tuesday 19 March 2024, 6pm at St Mary's Church	-

Goudhurst Parish Council



BURIAL AUTHORITY

Minutes of a Meeting held on 04 July at 7.00pm in Goudhurst Village Hall

Prior to the start of the meeting, members carried out a visual inspection of the Burial Ground and cemeteries.

174/23 It was **noted** that growth the bank on the south side of St Mary's, which is being left uncut, is encroaching on the disabled parking spaces. The Clerk was asked to request the contractor cut a metre strip around the area to resolve the problem.

175/23 It was **noted** that, despite changes to the regulations, there are still a lot of plastic flowers and cellophane wrap in the Burial Ground. The Clerk was asked to place a notice on the gate to the Burial Ground to advise visitors of the changes to the regulations. **Action: Clerk.**

The meeting was convened.

PARTICIPANTS

Councillors Present: Cllrs Antony Harris, Edward Hodgskin, Phil Kirkby, Geoff Mason and Caroline Richards.

Officers Present: Mrs Claire Reed, Clerk.

ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN

176/23 It was **resolved** unanimously to elect Cllr Caroline Richards as chairman of the committee.

APOLOGIES

177/23 There were none.

DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

178/23 There were none.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

179/23 It was **resolved** that the minutes of the Burial Authority meeting held on 21 March 2023, and previously distributed to members via Board Intelligence, be accepted as a correct record.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

180/23 There were none.

MEMORIAL APPLICATIONS

181/23 The committee considered the application for a memorial as presented at the meeting. It was **noted** that the Burial Authority regulations do not permit memorials for those not interred in Goudhurst. Therefore, the memorial application was refused. However, the Burial Authority **resolved** to accept an amended version of the wording as proposed at the meeting. **Action: Clerk to contact the family/ memorial mason with proposed changes.**

182/23 It was **resolved** to delegate authority to the Clerk to approve memorial applications in consultation with the Chair. It was **agreed** that only applications within the regulations would be approved by the Clerk, all other applications will be considered by the Burial Authority.

MEMORIAL BENCHES

- 183/23 The application to introduce a new memorial bench in the Burial Ground was considered. It was **resolved** that council will purchase and install a new memorial bench, to replace the dilapidated bench in the south west corner, and that families will be able to purchase memorial plaques to be added to the bench. **Action: Clerk**

MAINTENANCE OF THE BURIAL GROUND

- 184/23 It was **agreed** that the Clerk should seek quotes to heavily cut back the hedges on both the east and west boundaries of the burial Ground which are encroaching on grave spaces/ memorials. It was further **agreed** that additional quotes should be sought to cut the growth on the top and back of the hedge on the west boundary. **Action: Clerk**
- 185/23 It was **noted** that a new working party had been established to weed the Burial Ground and Victorian Cemetery. Volunteers will meet fortnightly on a Wednesday at 2pm, starting on 19 July. The project is being called 'Weedy Wednesday'. Participants will be encouraged to bring a flask of drink and to make a social event of it. **Action: Clerk to advertise in the e-newsletter/ social media and to make a sign for the Burial Ground noticeboard.**
- 186/23 It was **noted** that members of the Green Spaces Working Group had attended a zoom meeting with the charity Caring for God's Acre to discuss ideas for eco-friendlier management of the Victorian Cemetery. Cllrs Geoff Mason and Caroline Richards will meet to discuss/ draft a management plan for consideration by council. **Action: Cllrs Geoff Mason and Caroline Richards.**

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 187/23 It was **noted** that the Clerk had not yet received confirmation of permission to fell the self-seeded Cyprus tree growing out of a grave in the Victorian Cemetery.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Next Burial Authority Meeting, Tuesday 19 September 2023, 6.00 pm in Goudhurst Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 7.13pm

Claire Reed
Clerk

Goudhurst Parish Council



STANDING ORDERS MEMORIAL MANAGEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE

Reviewed and approved by Council 12 December 2023

To be reviewed December 2025

1. Responsibility

- 1.1 Any memorial placed on a grave space remains the property of the owner(s) of the Exclusive Right of Burial. The owner is therefore responsible for its upkeep and maintenance and for ensuring the memorial remains in a safe condition.

Historically there have been a number of accidents in cemeteries around the UK, some of which have resulted in fatalities, due to memorials being unsafe. Whilst the memorials are the responsibility of the registered grave owner The Burial Authority has a responsibility for ensuring that its sites are safe for both staff to work in and for the public to visit.

- 1.2 The Burial Authority can take no responsibility for any damage, accidental or otherwise, to any memorial within its cemeteries. Therefore, any person arranging for the installation of a memorial must consider appropriate insurance that will cover repair or replacement of a memorial should it become damaged in the future.

It has to be understood that memorials are exposed to all types of weather and maintenance in and on the site. Memorial Masons will fix to the best standards of the day however future occurrences such as bad weather may result in memorials becoming damaged or destroyed beyond repair. Your memorial mason will be able to advise of insurance options available to you.

2. Memorial Fixing

- 2.1 All memorials over 625 mm (24.5 inches) in height must be fixed to, and fully compliant with, the current British Standard (BS8415). This extends to ANY memorial over 625 mm (24.5 inches) that is being re-fixed following an interment or removal for any other reason.
- 2.2 Only Monumental Masons on the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) or those on the Register of Qualified Memorial Fixers (RQMF) are authorised to carry out re-fixing or repair works at Goudhurst. The Clerk can provide guidance on registered masons.

3. Memorial Inspections

- 3.1 All memorials over 625 mm (24.5 inches) in height in all cemeteries will be inspected by trained staff at least once during a rolling 2-year period to assess their safety. This will be done through both a visual assessment and a basic hand test to determine if there is movement in the memorial and to what extent.
- 3.2 The individual undertaking the assessment will make the decision on the memorial's overall safety based on a dynamic risk assessment for which they have been trained.
- 3.3 Once inspected each memorial will fall into one of three categories, detailed as follows:

- **Red** – Memorial is unsafe and poses a risk. It requires require immediate attention to make safe and/or protect the public.
- **Amber** – Memorial is safe but there are minor concerns and it should be reassessed in 12 months' time to ensure it has not deteriorated further.
- **Green** – Memorial is safe and should be re-inspected in 2 years as part of the next round of inspections or as part of any other check that may occur, for example when checking memorials around a planned burial ahead of excavation of the grave.

The Council has a legal obligation to ensure all of its sites are safe to both visit and work in. In order to be satisfied that this is the case it is essential that Goudhurst Burial Authority carry out regular inspections of memorials on the sites in a bid to avoid injury or death to any of its staff or visitors.

3.4 Staff undertaking the inspections will record the details of every memorial and an assessment of its safety using the categories above. These details will be recorded on the Burials administration system. The details will include:

- Date of Inspection
- Name of Inspector
- Grave Identification (Section, Row and Number)
- Category of Memorial (Red, Amber, Green)
- Details of any Actions Taken

4. Actions Post Inspection

4.1 Should a Memorial be identified as a 'Red', and fail the inspection, staff will need to take immediate action to make that memorial temporarily safe or cordon it off until permanent repairs can be made by the grave owner. These actions will be based on a number of factors and the best solution will be administered by the memorial inspection team based on their assessment of the memorial and the surrounding area. These actions may include:

- **Laying the memorial flat** – In most cases this will be where a memorial can be laid down on or within an existing kerb set so as not to cause a new trip hazard.
- **Stake and Banded** – The memorial will be fastened tight to a wooden post which will act as a temporary support. The banding will also hold a warning notice. The stake and band will be re-inspected every 12 months to ensure neither have deteriorated.
- **Monolith Conversion** – This involves digging out a depth roughly one third of the overall height of the memorial from the last joint in order that it can be sunk into the ground and made safe. The memorial will have a suitable material wrapped around the part under the ground and a memorial warning notice will be added to the grave. Due to foundations it may be necessary for the memorial to be moved slightly forward into the grave space to avoid existing foundations.
- **Cordoned Off** – In some cases it may be necessary to cordon off a particular memorial or an area containing a number of memorials due to their safety. Warning signs will be attached to any cordon placed around a memorial or group of memorials.

- **Removal** – In extreme cases it may be necessary to remove a memorial from the grave and place into storage if none of the above options are suitable.

All of the above are regarded as 'Temporary Fixes' and should not be seen as a permanent solution to deal with an unsafe memorial. They are intended to reduce or remove the risk of a memorial causing harm or damage to someone. Prior to taking any of the actions above the memorial will be photographed and details recorded of any existing damage or issues.

- 4.2 Large memorials over 1.6m (5.2ft) will be visually assessed and if any concerns are recorded the memorial will be cordoned off and arrangements will be made for a specialist contractor to undertake an inspection and provide a detailed report including costs and options to make safe.

5. Informing Grave Owners

- 5.1 Goudhurst Burial Authority will endeavour to contact the grave owner when any action has been taken due to a memorial failing a safety inspection. However, if the grave owner is recorded as deceased or the last burial was over 50 years, no correspondence will be sent but a notice will be left on the grave space for a period of not less than 12 months.
- 5.2 Any memorial installed within the previous 6 years that fails an inspection that has been we will contact the memorial mason directly to request repairs be made to ensure the memorial is fully compliant with BS8415.

The stability guarantee of a memorial is the responsibility of the memorial mason and they may provide a longer guarantee period, 6 years is the standard legal period that must be covered by the installation.

6. Repairs to Memorials

- 6.1 The registered grave owner has a responsibility to ensure a memorial is made safe by being properly re-fixed to the current BS8415 standard by a Memorial Mason on the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) or those on the Register of Qualified Memorial Fixers (RQMF).
- 6.2 'Do it yourself' repairs by families will not be permitted. All costs associated with organising for a memorial to be repaired, including the reversal of any works undertaken on behalf of the Burial Authority, remain the responsibility of the grave owner.
- 6.3 Should a grave owner fail to take any action within a reasonable time period, the Burial Authority may look to find a semi-permanent solution. This may be laying the memorial flat, sinking the memorial into the ground (monolith conversion) or another suitable action.

The Burial Authority needs to maintain its sites to a high standard and will always try to avoid taking any action that may impact on the general grounds maintenance of sites.

St Mary's Churchyard – Plan Bee Proposal

Firstly, the PCC would like to thank Geoff Mason for all the work and enthusiasm he has put into this proposal, as agreed we are coming back with our thoughts in writing.

Goudhurst Parish Council has responsibility over maintaining the three graveyards associated with St Mary's Church, with the church building itself being maintained by the St Mary's PCC. GPC's proposal is to align maintenance with Kent's Plan Bee to encourage growth in the number of native flora and fauna species in the Churchyard, the Victorian Graveyard and the Burial Ground by allowing certain areas to go un-mown for longer than is traditional. GPC have presented a sympathetic management plan for the Churchyard having met with members of the PCC in September 2023.

This response concerns only the Churchyard; however we would also like to see the management plan for the Victorian Graveyard to the south of St Mary's.

The PCC has no dispute with the aims of the plan but has three areas of concern:

1. The actively used cremation plots against the church and to the north must be neat, accessible and weed free.
2. Weeds cannot be allowed to grow between paving slabs and bricks, nor against the church building. Such growth would damage the fabric of the paths and walls and would detract from the site's aesthetics.
3. There is a worry that the long grass areas may, towards the end of their season, look unkempt.

In all cases we ask that GPC are adaptable in their management in order to meet the PCC's expectations of this being only an improvement – if at any time the weeds prove damaging or the overgrowth detracts, we would expect GPC to act.

In the case of the longer growing areas GPC has suggested that one of the zones is left to see what dormant wildflowers will emerge, whilst in the other pro-active seeding of native wildflowers is done. As time goes on we can assess which would work best in achieving Plan Bee's aim.

In the case of concerns 1 and 2 the PCC believe that careful and limited herbicide use would be more effective in stopping weed establishment than the alternatives suggested. GPC have proposed manual weeding by volunteers backed up with milder treatments than a commercial herbicide. An adaptable approach would be to closely monitor growth under the GPC plan on

the understanding that if available volunteers cannot keep it as we expect, herbicides can be used.

It is important that the community see that the change in management is deliberate and positive, to that end we'd offer space in the foyer for an educational display and suggest that small weatherproof signs could be placed strategically around the Graveyard. It was also suggested that – as in some other churchyards and parks – the longer growth areas are roped off.

St Mary's is at the centre of a beautiful village, is the focal point of community worship and the backdrop for many showpiece moments in our lives: whilst we fully agree with the ethics of Plan Bee and understand that the maintenance of the open spaces is under GPC control, our expectation is that it always looks it's best and that it's fabric cannot be damaged. Wild flowers and insect populations grow over time and we'd want to stipulate that GPC are always adaptable throughout that growth in ensuring our expectations are met.

October 10th 2023