

Crewkerne & West Crewkerne Joint Burial Committee

Townsend Cemetery Rules for Funeral Directors and Gravediggers

1. Definitions

1.1 For the purposes of these rules:

- **'council'** means Crewkerne Town Council.
- **'cemetery'** means Townsend Cemetery, Crewkerne.
- **'ashes interment'** means the interment of cremated remains in a cremation plot or full-size burial plot.
- **'full burial'** means the interment of a body in a full-size burial plot.
- **'New Section'** and **'Old Section'** mean the areas of Townsend Cemetery identified by those names on the cemetery plan maintained by the council.

1.2 Where there is any doubt as to whether a grave is located within the Old Section or New Section, the council shall determine which section applies by reference to the cemetery plan and the council's burial records.

2. Applications and Interments

2.1 Notice of Interment forms must be received at the Crewkerne Town Council offices at least three clear working days before the date of interment. Working days do not include Saturdays, Sundays, public holidays, other occasions introduced by legislation pertaining to England, the day notice is received or the day of interment.

2.2 Any proposed interment involving a double coffin or casket must be notified to the committee in advance and must not proceed without the committee's approval.

2.3 No interment will be permitted unless the appropriate fee has been received by the council except in the case of children under 16, where no interment fee is payable for that child.

2.4 All fees to be charged will be doubled where the deceased's address at the time of death was outside the parishes of Crewkerne and West Crewkerne, except where:

- a) the deceased had moved out of either parish within the previous 12 months; or
- b) the deceased had moved away to receive residential care or end-of-life care.

2.5 The position of new burial and cremation plots shall be determined by the committee or an authorised officer of Crewkerne Town Council.

2.6 Applications for new grave or cremation plots in the New Section will normally be allocated the next available space, unless special circumstances apply and an alternative allocation has been agreed with the committee or authorised officer of Crewkerne Town Council.

2.7 For interments in an existing plot, the holder(s) of the Exclusive Right of Burial must be confirmed by Crewkerne Town Council officers.

2.8 No burial will be allowed until the legal holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial for the plot has been established. Where the holder(s) is/are deceased, the Exclusive Right of Burial must be transferred to another holder in accordance with the legal procedure prior to interment.

- 2.9 Only coffins and caskets made of wood or other biodegradable materials shall be used for interment.

3. Burial and Cremation

- 3.1 All coffins and caskets must be clearly identified with the name of the deceased.
- 3.2 The Funeral Director is requested to provide photographic confirmation of the completed interment to the committee following the funeral, wherever reasonably practical.
- 3.3 The Funeral Director is responsible for employing a suitably competent and experienced gravedigger and must ensure that all gravedigging work is carried out in accordance with these rules. The grave digger must have appropriate training and experience in grave excavation and cemetery working practices, including relevant health and safety requirements.
- 3.4 A copy of the Funeral Director's public liability insurance certificate, providing a minimum of £5 million cover, must be provided to Crewkerne Town Council.
- 3.5 All burial and cremation plots will be of double-depth unless ground conditions are unsuitable. Triple-depth plots may be provided on request, subject to ground conditions.
- 3.6 Cremated remains may only be interred in a previously purchased cremation plot or an existing full-size burial plot. Scattering of cremated remains is not permitted except within the designated Garden of Remembrance.
- 3.7 The position of each burial or cremation plot shall be determined and marked out by Crewkerne Town Council staff. The marking shall identify the correct plot for the gravedigger or funeral director to prepare. No plot shall be excavated until its position has been confirmed and marked out by the council.
- 3.8 The Funeral Director is responsible for the provision of sufficient bearers to convey the coffin to the grave side.
- 3.9 The Funeral Director is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure the safety and appropriate behaviour of those attending the funeral. Mourners must not participate in backfilling any grave or cremation plot.
- 3.10 All signage, equipment and materials brought into the cemetery for a funeral must be safely removed following the interment.
- 3.11 Crewkerne Town Council must have received the appropriate documentation at least two working days before the interment takes place:
a) For burials, a certificate from the Registrar of Deaths or Coroner; or
b) For cremations, the appropriate Cremation Certificate.
No interment will take place until the required documentation has been received by the council.

4. Gravedigging

- 4.1 All work in the cemetery must comply with the ICCM Code of Safe Working Practice for Cemeteries and the council's policies and cemetery rules.
- 4.2 New burial plots are 275cm (9ft) long x 122cm (4ft) wide.

- 4.3 Burial plots will normally be dug to a depth of 213cm (7ft) for a double-depth burial, and cremation plots must be no less than 90cm (3ft), subject to ground conditions.
- 4.4 Cremation plots are approximately 1.2m x 1.2m (4ft x 4ft). Cremation plots must be dug by an authorised member of Crewkerne Town Council staff, or a competent gravedigger instructed by council staff.
- 4.5 No body shall be buried in a plot so that any part of the coffin is at a depth of less than 90cm (3ft) below the level of the ground adjoining the plot.
- 4.6 No body shall be buried in a plot unless the coffin is effectively separated from any other coffin already in that plot by a layer of earth not less than 15cm (6in) in thickness.
- 4.7 The maximum number of interments permitted in a full-size burial plot in the New Section is two burials and up to six sets of cremated remains for a double-depth plot, or three burials and up to six sets of cremated remains for a triple-depth plot. The maximum number of ashes interments permitted in an ashes plot is four. Interments in the Old Section will be considered on a case-by-case basis. All interments are subject to sufficient accurate information being available to reasonably establish that no human remains will be disturbed and no offensive soil removed. In cases of doubt, the matter will be referred to the Crewkerne Town Council Clerk for determination, who may consult the committee where necessary.
- 4.8 The area excavated for a burial must be no more than 213cm (7ft) long x 60-66cm (24-26in) wide depending on the size of the coffin. Where a wider excavation is necessary, prior permission must be obtained from the committee.
- 4.9 On completion of each burial gravediggers must remove all boards, wheelbarrows and equipment and other materials from the cemetery.
- 4.10 All graves must be dug centrally within the respective grave space to the exact dimensions indicated. Graves that are not dug centrally may will increase the risk of collapse, due to the reduced thickness of undisturbed soil on one side.
- 4.11 The 60cm (2ft) at the head of the grave must be kept available for the installation of a headstone and its foundation. Ashes may be interred within this area where permitted by the council.
- 4.12 When filling a plot, earth must be tamped down every 15cm (6in) and the surface levelled ready for mowing. Where subsidence occurs within six months of burial, the Funeral Director or gravedigger responsible for the excavation must rectify the subsidence.
- 4.13 Where any plot is re-opened for the purposes of making another interment, no person shall disturb any human remains already interred or remove any soil which is offensive.
- 4.14 Spoil must be disposed of in an area specified by the committee.
- 4.15 No vehicle or mechanical equipment may be driven over plots. Where access over a plot is considered necessary, prior permission must be obtained from the committee. Any damage caused must be repaired by the person responsible.
- 4.16 Walkboards should remain in place throughout the burial process, being positioned before excavation commences and not removed until backfilling has been completed.

- 4.17 At least two people must be present whenever excavation or work is being carried out within a grave, and appropriate protective clothing must be worn.
- 4.18 A suitable ladder must remain in place whenever an operative is working in a grave in order to provide a safe means of entry and emergency exit. Entry and egress from a grave must be by ladder. Under no circumstances must a gravedigger climb out of a grave by stepping on any part of the shoring.
- 4.19 Shoring must be incorporated as excavation proceeds and must be sufficient to prevent the collapse of the sides of the grave. Soil type and weather conditions must be taken into account when determining the shoring requirements.
- 4.20 A Soil box (soil tidy) should be used where reasonably practical to contain excavated material, and must be securely erected to prevent collapse.
- 4.21 Any open grave left unattended for any reason must be completely boarded over in a manner that prevents any person from falling into the grave. Lockable covers may be used where appropriate.
- 4.22 Finished graves should be prepared using suitable imitation grass matting. The matting will be laid neatly on the staging, with no folds or gaps that could create a trip hazard. Walkboards or staging must be positioned along the length of the grave, supported at each end and capable of safely carrying the weight of the pallbearers and coffin.
- 4.23 Any foul odours encountered must be reported to Crewkerne Town Council as soon as is reasonably practical.
- 4.24 On completion of each excavation the gravedigger must ensure that the sides and ends of the grave are vertical, the bottom of the grave is level and any shoring units are correctly positioned and level.
- 4.25 Any water collecting in a grave must be removed prior to the interment by the gravedigger.
- 4.26 Backfilling must commence immediately after all mourners have left the cemetery and must be completed on the same day. Graves must be backfilled to a maximum height of 15cm (6in) above the surrounding ground level to allow for settlement.
- 4.27 Where necessary, the levelling of sunken graves will only be carried out by Crewkerne Town Council staff.
- 4.28 Following a burial, the surface of the grave must be covered with fresh turf until a headstone, if any, is erected. Bare earth must not be left exposed.
- 4.29 Where ashes are interred into a grave plot, the funeral director shall keep and maintain a record or diagram of their burial position and provide a copy to the council.

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These rules will be reviewed every four years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or council practice.

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