



# **Memorial Testing Policy**

**Adopted on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

## **1. Introduction**

Balderton Parish Council is committed to ensuring the safety of everyone that visits Balderton Cemetery and St Giles Churchyard. The council is responsible for managing risks at these sites and this policy gives details of how the council monitors memorials to ensure they are safe and if not, how this will be addressed.

## **2. Memorial Ownership**

Any memorial purchased and erected on a grave space is owned by the registered grave owner and it is that person (or persons) who are ultimately responsible for its upkeep and maintenance. 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 Balderton Parish Council has a responsibility for ensuring that its sites are safe for both staff to work in and for the public to visit.

## **3. Memorial Fixing**

All memorials over 24.5 inches (625 mm) in height must be fixed to, and fully compliant, with the current British Standard (BS8415). This also extends to ANY memorial over 24.5" (625 mm) that is being refixed following an interment or removal for any other reason.

The key requirements are that memorials must be fixed to an approved and suitable foundation (where one is not provided by the authority) and must be further secured using an approved locking or anchoring system.

Note that any refixing or repair works to memorials must be completed by a BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) (or other equivalent scheme) registered memorial mason. Temporary works to make memorials safe and remove the risk of danger will be undertaken by trained Balderton Parish Council staff.

## 4. Memorial Inspections

All memorials over 24" in height in the cemetery/churchyard will be inspected by trained staff at least once during a rolling 5-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. The individual undertaking the assessment will make the decision on the memorials overall safety based on a dynamic risk assessment for which they have been trained.

Once inspected each memorial will fall into one of three categories, detailed as follows:

**Category 1** – Memorial is unsafe and poses a risk and will require immediate attention to make safe and/or protect from the public.

**Category 2** – Memorial is safe but there are minor concerns, and it should be reassessed in 12 months' time to ensure it has not deteriorated further.

**Category 3** – Memorial is Safe and should be re-inspected in 5 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 its sites are safe to both visit and work in. To be satisfied that this is the case it is essential that Balderton Parish Council carry out regular inspections of Memorials in the sites in a bid to avoid injury or death to any of its staff or visitors.

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 saved onto the Balderton Parish Council administration system. The details will include:

- Date of Inspection
- Name of Inspector
- Grave Identification (Section, Number, Name of deceased)
- Category of Memorial (1, 2 or 3)
- Details of any actions taken

## 5. Action to make memorial safe

Should a memorial be identified as a Category 1 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 Balderton Parish Council staff based on their assessment of the memorial and the surrounding area. These actions may include:

- Laying the memorial flat – In most cases this will invariably be where a memorial can be laid down on or within an existing kerb set so as not to cause a new trip hazard. A warning sign will be placed near to the memorial.
- Stake and band – 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 reinspected 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 the above are regarded as 'Temporary Fixes' and should not be seen as a permanent solution to deal with an unsafe memorial and 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.
- **Very large memorials**, those over 8' (2.5M) will be visually assessed and if any concerns are recorded the memorial will be cordoned off and if it is safe and possible to do so Balderton Parish Council staff will carry out works to ensure the memorials are safe. If Balderton Parish Council staff are not able to make the memorial safe arrangements will be made for a specialist contractor to undertake an inspection and provide a detailed report including costs and options to make safe.

## **6. Informing Grave Owners**

Balderton Parish Council will endeavour to contact the grave owner where any action has been taken due to a memorial failing a safety inspection. Correspondence will only be sent providing that the grave owner is not recorded as being in the grave or if it is apparent that the registered address no longer exists. For any memorials over 50 years of age no correspondence will be sent but a notice will be left on the grave space for a period of not less than 12 months.

Balderton Parish Council will make every effort to contact grave owners, however if the grave owner is deceased or the last burial was over 50 years ago in our experience it is unlikely that any response will be received therefore no correspondence will be sent.

In the event of any memorial failing an inspection that has been installed within the previous 6 years 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.

## 7. Grave Owners Responsibilities

The registered grave owner has a responsibility to ensure the memorial is made safe through being properly re-fixed to the current BS8415 standard and works must be undertaken by a qualified and BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) registered memorial mason. Do it yourself repairs by families will not be permitted, memorials must be fixed to the current best standard of the day by a licensed memorial fixer. All costs associated with organising a memorial to be repaired, including the reversal of any works undertaken by Balderton Parish Council staff, remain the responsibility of the grave owner.

Should grave owners fail to take any action within a reasonable time period then Balderton Parish Council will look to apply a semipermanent solution to the memorial, this will involve either laying the memorial flat or sinking the memorial into the ground (monolith conversion) or other suitable action. Balderton Parish Council need to maintain all 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.

Grave owners are strongly advised to organise and take out their own insurance cover against any accidental damage that may occur to the memorial. The council cannot be held liable for any damage to a memorial that is caused by any factors outside of our control such as damage due to storms that may cause falling debris and recommend that any insurance covers damage of this type. Grave owners own insurance company may be able to assist, alternatively discuss options with their chosen memorial mason.

### Contact details:

**Email:** [office@baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:office@baldertonparishcouncil.gov.uk)

**Phone:** 01636 703626

**Post:** Balderton Village Centre, Coronation Street, Balderton NG24 3BD