

DALSTON PARISH COUNCIL

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CEMETERY POLICY

Adopted by Full Council on 12 December 2023

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Dalston Parish Council is responsible for the administration and maintenance of St. Michael's Churchyard, its paths, trees and grass care. Free access for grass cutting machinery must be preserved at all times. Free access is also required for burials in adjoining graves, so flowers can only be placed on the headstone's base in a suitable container (not glass) and border stones, fencing and permanent planting are not permitted on any grave space. Artificial Flowers are not permitted nor any other unnatural or loose items. Permission may be granted for spring bulbs, following written application. The Parish Council reserves the right to remove any items not contained within the footprint of the headstone base, or which could blow onto the grassed area or which we consider inappropriate or unsightly. Christmas wreaths will be removed before the grass cutting programme begins.

Burials and Interments

When a grave space is 'purchased', this refers to the exclusive right of burial in the grave space and not the purchase of the land itself. This means that you do not own the land but have the exclusive right to say who is buried there. In accordance with the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, all burial rights are issued for a fixed period. Dalston Parish Council currently issues them for 100 years from the date of issue – the maximum possible. In some cemeteries it can be as little as 30 years. As the remaining lease period reduces, owners have the opportunity to purchase subsequent lease periods of 50 or 70 years as long as the total ownership at any time does not exceed 100 years. The Deed of Grant states who is the current Legal Registered Owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial for a grave, as recorded in the cemetery records. Please keep us informed of any changes in contact details. Grave spaces can be purchased at any time.

We do not allow D.I.Y. burials, the scattering of ashes (they must be buried in a grave space or in the cremated remains area), burials of wrapped bodies, burials in american caskets, wicker, cardboard or bamboo coffins.

Dalston Parish Council do not provide funeral director services. Please use a registered funeral director, including for direct burials or cremations (i.e. without a funeral or memorial service).

The fees, listed below, included administration, attendance of staff where necessary, digging of the grave and use of grave mats. They apply only when interment takes place on weekdays between 9 am and 5 pm. On Saturdays fees increase by 50%, on Bank Holidays fees are doubled. On Sundays fees are doubled and only permitted in an emergency certified by a coroner or a Registered Medical Practitioner.

Graves must only be dug on the day of burial.

Grave depths: Single to be dug at 4ft 6ins; double to be dug at 6ft with second interment at 4ft 6 ins; cremated remains at a minimum of 18 inches.

The maximum number of interments in a grave space is two full body coffins and 8 cremated remains caskets. The cremated remains caskets to be recorded in the burial register as 1L(left) 1R (right) etc. down to 4R with 1 being nearest the headstone and 4 nearest the foot of the grave space.

Headstones and Memorials

Details of the headstone and inscription must receive Parish Council approval before erection or placement. It should fit in with, not stand out from, existing memorials. In the cremated remains area they should be 60cm x 60cm (2ft by 2 ft) and placed flat on the grave space. In the full body grave area headstones should be at the head of the grave space, upright, no more than a metre (3ft 3 ins) high, 90cm (3ft) wide, on a secure plinth maximum 45cm (1ft 6ins) deep on a secure foundation. Any rose bowls must be fitted into this plinth. Headstones should not be placed on a grave for at least 6 months after burial to allow the ground to settle and reduce any movement. All memorials need the ward, section and space/letter to be inscribed in the bottom left hand corner. The final decision will rest with The Parish Council. Nothing must be added to the memorial subsequently.

Headstones and memorials can only be installed by a Council approved monumental mason to B.S.8415. This means headstones must be fixed to a National Association of Monumental Masons approved foundation and securely fitted in. We do not allow kerbstones, fencing or memorials that are flat or covering the full grave space. Existing memorials do not set a precedent for future memorials.

Lettering should be a discreet colour, not too bright and never fluorescent. Any renewal of lettering should be done by a monumental mason. Plaques and photos are not permitted on headstones and memorials.

The Parish Council will not accept responsibility for any damage to memorials by third parties, subsidence, storm, lightning or other cause. Criminal damage to memorials should be reported to the police. Grave owners may wish to consider taking out insurance cover.

The responsibility for the safety and upkeep, including repairs to any gravestone or memorial, remains solely with the owner(s) of the grave or their successor(s) in title for the duration of the lease period. It is important that the Parish Council is kept updated with contact details. If a safety inspection deems a memorial unsafe, the Parish Council will contact the owner(s) to confirm that they will arrange for the headstone to be repaired and made safe. If this response is not forthcoming, the Parish Council reserves the right to remove, move or lay flat the memorial and charge the owner for so doing.

In exceptional circumstances matters will be discussed and decided at the monthly Parish Council meeting.