

Briefing

Cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds

Urban burial grounds in the 19th century were originally envisaged as public open spaces, and were professionally designed to be attractive places to visit in their own right. Today, many cemeteries are neglected, with little to attract anyone apart from those visiting specific burial plots. This lack of design, planning and ambition means that the potential health and environmental benefits of cemeteries are not being realised.

Introduction

There is a lack of information about the number of operational or closed cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds in England. There is also an absence of over-arching regulation of burial and cremation practices.

Different religions and cultures have developed different rites and practices for the disposal of the dead, and these have to be considered and respected. There are a number of separate Jewish and Muslim cemeteries, for example, but there are also many cemeteries where different religions are given separate areas within the public cemetery. The dominant form of funerary rite in the UK is cremation, accounting for 72 per cent of all disposals. It has been argued that the high rate of cremation may not be wholly explained by choice, but may be partly explained by the absence of locally accessible, well-managed cemeteries with available burial space. Natural burial is growing in popularity for environmental reasons, though most natural burial sites are still provided within existing public cemeteries.

Many historic cemeteries, now full, have become neglected, though they may well contain buildings, artefacts and landscapes of great heritage value and interest. Many of the great 19th century urban cemeteries were designed and laid out by the same people who created public parks, and were considered to belong to the 'park family'. They were regarded as much as public landscapes as they were functional burial places. This close relationship between the cemetery and the park has disappeared from many local authority perceptions and strategies. Yet cemeteries may still deliver as many amenity and ecological benefits as parks, and

should be brought back into the mainstream of parks and green space provision.

Thus there is a need for local cemetery strategies that should also be integrated into wider local authority green space strategies. The Green Flag Award scheme is increasingly being used to monitor and reward good cemetery management and provision.

Cemeteries, churchyards and burial spaces are often highly valued by communities for their 'spiritual' as well as place-making and place-marking qualities. The growth of cemetery friends' groups is a sign that the public wish to engage again with conservation and environmental projects based on cemeteries and churchyards.

Types of burial site

In England and Wales, burial took place principally in churchyards until the 19th century. Concerns about hygiene in the mid-19th century resulted in many town and city churchyards being closed. This was followed by the development of larger joint-stock cemeteries and municipal cemeteries, often on urban fringes. These took on the larger proportion of burials. The term 'burial grounds' is often used to denote either, though it is also used to denote the burial place of a distinctive group, either by religion or national identity.

Most cemeteries contain both consecrated and unconsecrated sections, sometimes with areas given over to the burial of members of other religions. There are a number of dedicated Jewish cemeteries, and several Muslim cemeteries in the UK. There are also private burial grounds and memorial gardens. In recent years there has been a growth in the number of natural burial sites

(sometimes called woodland burial, though this term is not used by practitioners), a number of which are privately owned and managed, reflecting an interest in more environmentally friendly forms of body disposal.

Dr Julie Rugg of the Cemetery Research Group at York University has provided some interesting typological and anthropological distinctions between, cemeteries, churchyards, burial grounds, mass burial sites, war cemeteries and pantheons, which may be followed up by reference to 'Relevant reports and documents', page 8.

There are also a growing number of pet cemeteries, privately run, where the actual or cremated remains of pets are interred, reflecting the privileged attachment that many people in modern societies feel for animals. This trend is growing, and local authorities are sometimes under pressure to provide such facilities.

The legal status of burial grounds

Three extracts relating to the legal status of cemeteries and churchyards, taken from the document *Burial Law and Policy in the 21st Century*:

'Although it is the public law duty of the Church of England and, to a certain extent, of the Church in Wales, to provide for burials in open churchyards, there is at present no statutory requirement on any public authority or private undertaking to make available a place for burial'

'The law relating to burial (including exhumation and the disturbance of human remains) is not to be found within a single statute or coherent body of legislation.'

'The distinction between consecrated and unconsecrated burial land remains fundamental to English and Welsh burial law'

There is no obligation to notify any local or national government body that a cemetery has either been opened or closed, and the development of new burial grounds is largely unregulated.

Burial in 'private' or 'family' graves was assumed to be 'in perpetuity' until the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977. This stipulated rights of burial for a maximum period of 100 years, except in the case of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which can still grant burial rights without limit.

Church of England churchyards may be closed for further burials by Order in Council, a process which cannot be reversed. Under English law the Church of England is allowed to pass to local authorities

churchyards closed for burials responsibility for care and maintenance.

Although monuments are private property, the power to remove them or make them safe now resides in the hands of local authorities under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977.

The particular role played by cemeteries and crematoria is politically and culturally sensitive enough that the activities which take place within them are covered by: Anatomy Act 1871, 1984; Births and Deaths Registration Act 1874, 1926, 1953; Burial Acts 1852, 1906; Burial Law Amendment Act 1880; Cemeteries clauses Act 1847; Coroners Act 1988; Environmental Protection Act 1990; Health and Safety at Work Act; Human Tissue Act 1961; Human Tissue Bill 2004; Interments Act 1881; Local Government Act 1972; Medical Act 1956, 1969, 1978; Open Spaces Act 1906; Planning Act 1964; Public Health Act 1848, 1875, 1936, 1984; Registration of Burial Act 1864; Still Birth Definition Act 1992; Town and Country Planning Act 1990

The most active form of regulation of cemeteries and new cemetery developments is now exercised by The Environment Agency, largely due to a concern with the pollution of water sources. However there is also concern at emissions from crematoria, and new standards might bring about the upgrading or re-siting of some existing crematoria.

Summary of statistics regarding cemeteries

The current consensus is that there are about 3,500 historic (pre-1914) cemeteries in the UK, according to the Confederation of Burial Authorities. Many more have been established since then, though the statistics remain uncollected. The Cemetery Research Group estimates that in England and Wales, some 350 district level authorities maintain about 1,800 cemeteries. This does not include the number of cemeteries owned and maintained by parish councils, the figures of which remain uncollected. There is also insufficient record of how many Catholic or nonconformist (eg Quaker) burial grounds there are.

In addition there are thousands of churchyards in England and Wales, many closed to further burials (at least 6,000 of which are now maintained as distinct eco-systems), but with many others still being used for human interments.

These figures can be related to the evidence given to the Select Committee by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CEM 23) when they stated that: 'In the United Kingdom the Commission is responsible for more than 170,000 graves in over 12,000 burial grounds.' In brief, the number of existing and identifiable cemeteries, churchyards and burial grounds in England and Wales, closed or operational, is more than 12,000 but likely to be less than 20,000.

The Survey of the Jewish Built Heritage has documented a total of 131 Jewish burial grounds in England and Wales dating from 1656 to 1939. However there are a large number of dedicated Jewish plots in municipal cemeteries.

A study by Andy Clayden at Sheffield University found that by 2004 there were nearly 190 natural burial sites in the UK, of which about 50 were privately owned, 130 owned by local authorities (often within existing cemeteries), and ten owned by charitable trusts. The number of such burial grounds is increasing.

In brief the number of churchyards, cemeteries and burial grounds in the UK can be counted in thousands, with little co-ordination between owners, or managers, in the sector as a whole.

Many have considerable historic heritage interest. As English Heritage admit: 'As the general appreciation of cemeteries as designed landscapes increased during the 1980s and 1990s, it became clear that many more deserved a place on the 'Register of Parks and Gardens'. In the 1980s only 14 cemeteries were thus registered, but by 2004 this had jumped to 110. Of registered cemeteries, about 60 per cent are Grade II, 30 per cent Grade II*, and ten per cent classified as Grade I.

The amount of green open space taken up by cemetery land varies from Authority to Authority. In parts of London, for historical reasons, the legacy of past burial practices is enormous. If you consider that in a borough like Newham in London over 60 per cent of public open space is made up of cemetery land (the figure for Kensington & Chelsea is 49 per cent), the lack of care and maintenance can have a particularly depressing or debilitating effect on surrounding communities.

Yet today the very same inner London boroughs are running out of burial space and in some cases – Hackney and Islington, for example – have none left at all. This means that burials happen in cemeteries

at some distance from the community in which the deceased once lived, breaking the connection between the living and the dead.

Burial, cremation, and the burial of cremated remains

The UK has one of the highest cremation rates in the world. People choose cremation for a variety of reasons including efficiency, hygiene, cost, and not wanting to leave behind the 'burden' of a grave to maintain. Where people die without making their preference for burial or cremation clear, surviving family members generally choose cremation. In the case of the deaths of young children, burial is generally chosen, and the creation of separate baby and children's areas in cemeteries is one innovation of the past 50 years.

Some religions disapprove of cremation, including the Jewish, Muslim, and, until recently, Catholic faiths. Modern day environmentalists may now prefer 'natural burial' in woodland settings to cremation, which is now coming under increasing scrutiny on environmental grounds.

Burial rituals and practices vary amongst religions, and can be a cause of conflict. For example, some bereaved groups may wish to hold very long graveside rituals and ceremonies, which may cause concern to other visitors or funeral parties; some groups insist on filling in the grave themselves; others may wish to erect headstones or monuments entirely out of scale or keeping with the surrounding landscape. All these cultural differences have to be negotiated. For this reason the management of cemeteries is a particularly sensitive issue in a multi-cultural society. In some cemeteries different religions or ethnic groups may be given

separate sections of a cemetery, while other cemetery authorities may not have the space to do this, or may choose not to do so.

At present there are no consistent regulations concerning practices and accepted forms of behaviour in churchyards and cemeteries across the UK – nor as much attention paid to enacting by-laws as so often happens with parks. While the 'Charter for the Bereaved' is an excellent template for local authority bereavement practices, local authorities would welcome some kind of generalised good practice guide to the day to day codes and rules governing cemeteries across the UK.

In traditional burial terms, Jewish law allows only one body to be buried in any grave, and in perpetuity. There is an absolute proscription against the disturbance of remains for any reason, though historically this has happened. Nevertheless the presumption is that Jewish cemeteries will remain cemeteries in perpetuity, even after closure. Muslims allow the re-use of grave space in many countries, and are considered likely to adapt to whatever is the prevailing practice in the UK.

It is becoming more difficult to acquire a burial plot locally, especially in the larger conurbations, and it is also expensive. Indeed it is now acknowledged that many local authorities use pricing as a mechanism to manage demand.

One counter-trend to the rigid distinction between burial and cremation in recent years has been the growing trend in the burial of cremated remains in ceremonial containers. This means that crematorium gardens are becoming once again like burial grounds, with all the land-requirements and landscaping issues that implies.

Is there a crisis for British cemeteries?

The lack of attention to the number and quality of cemeteries in the UK in the 20th century can be partly attributed to the growing popularity of cremation, which now accounts for 72 per cent of all 'disposals'. Some cremated remains are buried in churchyards and cemeteries, some are scattered in memorial gardens, but many people take cremated remains away for private disposal (a practice that is frowned upon and in many cases forbidden elsewhere in Europe).

It could be argued that there now exists another example of 'English/British exceptionalism' with regard to burial and funerary culture compared with elsewhere in the world. The high proportion of cremations, the legal proscription against the re-use of graves until the present time, together with the large number of people who make private arrangements for the disposal of cremated remains, leaves the traditional churchyard, cemetery or burial ground in a seriously weakened position, especially in its role as a public green space or landscape of local identity and belonging.

So while there is a very limited number of burial ground types, there is an enormous range of differences in design aesthetics and culture across the UK. For example, the English Heritage study of a select number of registered cemeteries in Yorkshire discovered distinct regional features to their design and the materials used, representing: 'The genius of local designers and Yorkshire's nonconformist heritage, rather than grand names'. It is also not surprising that cemetery landscapes reflect the wider landscape and topographical characteristics of their region and setting, and for this reason are particularly interesting.

Equally worrying was the fact that the Yorkshire study discovered that although 35 per cent of Yorkshire cemeteries are in conservation areas: 'None of the Local Plans for the region highlight the conservation of cemeteries as valued historic environments'.

Despite the perception that there is a national crisis to do with the conservation of historic cemeteries, and maintenance of operational ones, there is also a view that this is very much a London perspective, and that outside London there are many good examples of churchyard and cemetery management and maintenance.

Nevertheless it is clear that in many places there is a shortage of local burial space, and pricing policies are being used to manage demand. Some would argue that if local burial is to be a genuine choice, then some form of subsidy may need to happen – but from where? Also, local authority cemetery managers are talking about a forthcoming upsurge in burial demand, as the present older generation finally succumbs to the demands of longevity.

One way in which some public and private cemeteries are dealing with the lack of burial space is through 'cramming' new graves into historic cemeteries, often in inappropriate places such as footpaths, and planting areas. This then destroys the original design and aesthetic harmony of the cemetery.

The heritage value and use of burial grounds

There is a strong case to be made that cemeteries have especial architectural and landscape interest because they have often been trapped in a time-warp, and have not been modified, adapted, overlaid, or even destroyed, as has so much else in the historic environment. This is an argument that is becoming increasingly heard elsewhere in Europe.

There are a very large number of listed buildings in cemeteries, according to the National Monuments Record Centre, including lodges and houses, boundary walls, gates, mortuary chapels, cemetery chapels, tombs, and mausoleums.

In Europe cemetery commissions have been sought and undertaken by many great architects – Asplund, Lewerentz, Rossi, Scarpa, Miralles, David Chipperfield (in Venice). However, in the UK there has been no real equivalent interest among big name architects since Lutyens. One or two crematorium buildings have some architectural interest, and Geoffrey Jellicoe's Memorial Gardens in Walsall (1949-54) is now listed.

Contemporary benefits of burial grounds

The 1994 report on the management of old cemeteries (Dunk & Rugg, 1994) enumerated four different kinds of value which cemeteries represent to today's society: historical, ecological, education and leisure (or amenity) benefits. This four-fold scheme is echoed in 'Paradise Preserved' which lists the most important benefits as being architecture, landscaping, wildlife and local amenity.

A well-maintained cemetery is still the site of a number of contemporary rituals. A study of users found that different religions and cultures visit cemeteries at different times: Orthodox Jews 'during the month of Elul, the time of the Jewish New Year, and also on the Hebrew anniversary of death'. Greek Orthodox on anniversary of death, All Souls' Day and at Easter.

On the other hand, research of cemetery users suggests that the bereaved often pay little attention to the wider landscape of the cemetery – as long as it generally feels safe and well managed – and many are very focused on the one burial plot in their visit, often never walking or even looking at any other part of the cemetery when visiting. While cemetery managers are principally concerned with serving the bereaved directly, other local and national organisations may need to argue more cogently for the wider historical and heritage aspects.

Some of the increasing public interest in cemetery conservation can be attributed to the growing popularity of family history, and the use of burial records and cemetery registers to identify family burial places, gravestones and monuments. Local Friends' Groups have also played an important role in campaigning to improve the conservation of cemeteries. Even so, there is no national collection or library of local cemetery guides.

There are a number of closed churchyards which have become public amenity land, especially in London, where park facilities and even children's play equipment can now be found.

The heritage conservation movement has also identified historic cemeteries as places of specific local heritage interest, as well as being very much a part of

the historic townscape. The place-making or local identity properties of churchyards and cemeteries are especially valued.

The 'Living Churchyards' project, already mentioned, is another example of how churchyards and cemeteries are increasingly valued for their bio-diversity value. According to ARC (Alliance of Religions and Conservation) 'more than 6,000 British churchyards run their small plots of land as sacred eco-systems – without pesticides and mowing the grass only once a year – ensuring that birds, reptiles, insects and bats can thrive'.

Current concerns – health and safety

In many historic churchyards and cemeteries, there is increasing concern about Health and Safety issues, notably to do with the dangers to children of falling masonry. This is currently presenting local authorities with a major headache, as they have to balance safety, cost and heritage factors when considering what to do to ensure the public use and appreciation of historic cemeteries and churchyards.

Between 1995 and 2004 there were four deaths caused by falling memorials in burial grounds, and today many thousands of headstones and memorials are now being force-tested for safety. Where found unstable, they are removed or laid flat, causing public concern that cemeteries are once again being 'vandalised'. Many of the least stable headstones date from recent times and are the result of poor design, or faulty workmanship.

This concern with safety is now influencing the design, robustness and positioning of new memorials and gravestones. In Jewish cemeteries it is becoming the

practice to lay new stones flat on the ground, as well as old stones thought to be in danger of toppling. Some argue that traditional monolithic headstones, in which one-third of the stone was sunk into the ground, did not cause these problems.

Burial grounds within the wider green space typology

It is often argued that the Victorian cemetery was part of the wider public park family, with many being designed and laid out by established park designers. As well as functioning as burial sites, they were also regarded as places for visiting and promenading of a more dignified and morally uplifting kind. The nineteenth-century legislation that provided for new burial grounds seemed to have envisaged that they would in due course become public open spaces (for which provision was made in the Open Spaces Acts 1887 and 1906).

Yet there is also a counter-tradition, which suggests that cemeteries should be regarded as distinct from parks. For example, Jewish cemeteries largely operate as closed spaces, literally and symbolically. Many are locked, and only opened for interment ceremonies, or by prior arrangement.

The Muslim Gardens of Peace at Hainault in Essex, welcomes visitors but within clear guidelines, and codes of dress and behaviour. While some people find turning closed cemeteries and churchyards into public amenity land acceptable, others do not. They continue to feel that a cemetery will always be a 'sacred' place of some kind, even if they are agnostic or without any religious belief at all.

Similarly there are differences in time frame. Researchers commissioned by the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium to interview cemetery users, chose to frame their discussions within the time-scale of 'the next 100 years', somewhat longer than might be thought appropriate in wider public space policy.

In public funding terms, the burial ground presents typological problems of another kind. While the cemetery itself may be publicly owned and accessible, the individual plots and monuments remain in private hands, and so grants for improvement could be contested from the point of view that public money is being spent on private benefit. This delicate private/public ecology has implications for both architectural and landscape integrity. Kitsch monumental tombs may destroy the overall architectural effect, as may inappropriate planting. There is much more regulation of memorial size and characteristics in Sweden, for example, where the notion of a 'good grave culture' is widespread, and the collective aesthetic is given precedence over individual taste.

Some closed churchyards and cemeteries are acquiring a new role in the green space typology as wildlife havens, but even this is role is disputed by some who fear heritage value will be displaced or even destroyed by an over-emphasis on natural habitat priorities. Some would argue that this has been the case at Nunhead Cemetery, an early recipient of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding, but a place where a landscape programme of what has been termed 'managed withdrawal' has left the architectural heritage compromised.

The need for separate national cemetery strategies

In 2002, HLF director Anthea Case, giving evidence to the select committee argued against establishing a dedicated cemeteries strategy or funding programme. However, the select committee was keen to stress that it did not regard cemeteries as being covered by the HLF urban parks programme.

The national planning policy guidance note 17 (PPG17) on open space, sport and recreation includes cemeteries within its recommended open space typology, indicating that they should be included within local open space standards. However, public concern concerning the re-use of graves may require public agencies to re-think the priority they give to cemetery issues.

The establishment of the Association for Significant Cemeteries in Europe (ASCE) indicates a revival of academic and architectural and landscape history interest in cemeteries across Europe. They are seen to embody period and regional cultural traditions which are fast disappearing elsewhere in the built environment and designed landscape.

The need for local authority cemetery strategies

While many local authorities have, or are currently developing green space strategies, few have separate cemetery strategies, though they are likely to have service plans or business plans for the bereavement services.

A number of reports have identified particular problems with the way in

which cemeteries and former churchyards are maintained by local authorities, including:

- A lack of specific policies for cemeteries (Dunk & Rugg, 1994)
- The low status of the service and its personnel within local authorities (Dunk & Rugg, 1994)
- The very low level of appropriate training among cemetery managers (Dunk & Rugg, 1994)
- The failure of higher levels of management within parks or leisure departments to appreciate that 'cemeteries are special environments', requiring much more sensitive and site-specific management and maintenance regimes (Dunk & Rugg, 1994)
- Whether cemeteries flourish better within 'Bereavement Services' departments rather than parks or leisure services (Select Committee, 2001)
- No Best Value Performance Indicators for cemeteries at present (Select Committee, 2001)
- Absence of proper management information and appreciation of cultural value, which results in low levels of funding (Select Committee, 2001).

A good example of a specific cemetery management plan and environmental strategy is that produced by Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council for Green Flag-winning Altrincham Crematorium and Dunham Lawn Cemetery 2004-2009.

Another difference between cemeteries and parks is that local authorities are slightly more willing to consider handing over closed churchyards, cemeteries and burial grounds to local trusts on long

leases. The number of cemeteries now managed by trusts already exceeds the number of parks so managed – though the figures are still relatively insignificant. Examples include Abney Park Cemetery Trust, Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust in Bristol, Sheffield General Cemetery Trust, and York Cemetery.

Green Flag cemeteries and other incentives to improvement

An increasing number of cemeteries and churchyards are being entered for the Green Flag, and winning. Between 2003 and 2007, the number of Green Flag winning cemeteries and crematorium memorial gardens has increased from three to 14.

Over the past decade there have also been several other industry initiatives to encourage best practice in cemetery maintenance and management. The 'Charter for the Bereaved' was established in 1996 by the then Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration (now the ICCM), and is awarded to cemeteries that can demonstrate a proper respect for the rights of the bereaved with regard to grave choice, cremation procedures, monuments, ceremonies, maintenance of graves, and other services. There are also the 'Phoenix Awards' organised annually by the Association of Burial Authorities to encourage creativity in cemetery and memorial design, and the 'Cemetery of the Year Awards' sponsored by the Confederation of Burial Authorities.

Funding for improvements

The HLF has funded a range of cemetery and churchyard improvement projects to date including some large grants including over £3 million to Arnos Vale in Bristol, and over £1 million each to Nunhead and Hampstead. It has also helped fund churchyard restoration projects under its Local Heritage Initiative.

Relevant reports and documents

Clayden, Andy (2004), *Natural Burial, British Style, Landscape Architecture*, May, USA

Davies, Douglas & Shaw, Alastair (1995), *Re-using Old Graves: A Report on Popular British Attitudes*, Crayford

Dunk, J. and Rugg, J. (1994), *The Management of Old Cemetery Land*, Crayford

English Heritage & English Nature (2002), *Paradise Preserved: an introduction to the assessment, evaluation, conservation and management of historic cemeteries*, London

English Heritage & Heritage Lottery Fund (2004), *Heritage Counts 2004: The State of England's Historic Environment*, London

Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee (2001), *House of Commons, Cemeteries: Volumes I & II*, London

Felicori, Mauro, and Zanotti, Annalisa (2004), *Cemeteries of Europe: A Historical Heritage to Appreciate and Restore*, Bologna

D. Francis, L. Kellaher & G. Neorphytous (2005), *The Secret Cemetery*, London

Grainger, Dr Hilary (2005), *Death Redefined: The Architecture of British Crematoria*, Spire Books

Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration (1996), *Charter for the Bereaved*, London

Kadish, Dr Sharman. (2003) *Jewish Burial Grounds and Funerary Architecture, English Heritage*, London

Lambert, David, (2004) *Heritage Lottery Fund Cemeteries Needs Assessment*

National Federation of Cemetery Friends (1997), *Notes on Saving Cemeteries*, Croydon

Rugg, J. (2000) *Defining the place of burial: what makes a cemetery a cemetery?* Mortality, 5,3.

Worpole, Ken (2003), *Last Landscapes: the architecture of the cemetery in the West*, London

Contacts

Association of Burial Authorities

Principally concerned with burial, rather than cremation. The Association also organises the Phoenix Awards.
Waterloo House, 155 Upper Street, London N1 1RA
Tel: 020 7288 2522
aba@swa-pr.co.uk

Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe

www.significantcemeteries.net

The Cemetery Research Group

Undertakes research into cemetery history and management issues.
Dr Julie Rugg, Centre for Housing Policy, University of York, Heslington, York YO10 5DD
www.york.ac.uk/inst/chp/crg

The Civic Trust

Organises the Green Flag Award for well-managed parks and green spaces, including cemeteries.
www.greenflagaward.org.uk

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Looks after 170,000 graves in 12,000 burial grounds across the UK.
2 Marlow Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire
Tel: 01628 634221

English Heritage

'Landscapes at risk' research and cemetery listings.
23 Savile Row, London W1S 2ET
Tel: 020 7973 3000
www.english-heritage.org.uk

Heritage Lottery Fund

Can provide grants to cemetery conservation projects of heritage value.
7 Holbein Place, London SW1W 8NR
www.hlf.org.uk

Ministry of Justice

Decides applications for exhumation licences, regulate the removal of human remains from disused burial grounds and consider applications for the closure of churchyards. Also provides advice on burial law and practice for the public and for burial professionals.

Selborne House, 54 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QW

Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management

Professional body handling education, training, and standards, and publishers of the important 'Charter for the Bereaved'.
City of London Cemetery, Aldersbrook Road, Manor Park, London E12 5DQ
www.iccm-uk.com

Jewish Heritage UK

www.jewish-heritage-uk.org

Living Churchyards

Encourages good practice in the conservation of historic churchyards as wildlife reserves.
Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), 3 Wynnstay Grove, Manchester M14 6XG
Tel: 0161 248 5731

Memorial Awareness Board

Organisers of the 'Cemetery of the Years Awards'
mab@mdacomms.com

National Association of Cemetery Friends

Links voluntary groups in the UK who wish to conserve and preserve local cemeteries and churchyards
Gwyneth Stokes, 42 Chestnut Grove, South Croydon CR2 7LH

The Natural Death Centre

Advises on natural burial and co-ordinates the Association of Natural Burial Grounds
6 Blackstock Mews, Blackstock Road, London N4 2BT

Local cemetery contacts

Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust

www.arnosvale.org.uk

Abney Park Cemetery Trust

Sheffield General Cemetery Trust

www.gencem.org

York Cemetery

www.yorkcemetery.org.uk

This briefing is based on a 2005 report by writer, environmentalist and CABA Space enabler Ken Worpole. It looks at current concerns about cemeteries and whether they are facing a crisis. It considers their legal status, heritage value and their contemporary benefits. It addresses the problems arising from the way that cemeteries are currently maintained by local authorities. It includes a useful bibliography and contact list.

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