

Freshford Cemetery Review - Additional Information for Councillors, June 2021

Cllr Nick Stevens and the Clerk, Selina Jobson

Background

There are a number of aspects to managing the Cemetery. Administrative processes, maintenance of the site and looking at broader issues such as the ecological management of the site and longer term space availability. Cllr Stevens has undertaken initial work on looking into these issues - considering the Government's Guide for Burial Management (2005) (*extracts from this are in italics*), information from Bath Records Office and comparison information from other local cemeteries. Further review will be undertaken as necessary.

Actions have been identified. It's proposed the most actions will be completed by the September parish Council meeting. Some actions, particularly planning for future space requirements, will take longer.

1. Definition of the Cemetery

There needs to be clarification (from Bath Records Office) as to the distinction made between consecrated and unconsecrated graves and whether the top 'triangle' is consecrated land. On The Bath Records Office plan of the Cemetery blue type indicates a grave unconsecrated and red a consecrated grave. This correlates with entries in the Record Book held by the Parish Clerk where records indicate if the person is buried in consecrated or unconsecrated land.

Bath Records Office describes the Cemetery in area as being of some 60 metres x 45 metres (evidence A). Applying the measurements to the map on Parish Online and using the Parish Online Measuring tool the area of the full rectangle (bisected by the path) is 64 metres x 42 metres. This appears to confirm that the cemetery consists of the whole rectangle of land and that the whole land was consecrated by the Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1872 when according to tradition he would have walked the bounds of the cemetery and marked each corner with the sign of the cross (evidence B and C).



Old map of the Cemetery

Note that the plots lie on an east/west orientation and that the two main paths run north to south. In recent years plots have been allocated in an area of the land where no land has been allocated for pathways.

The map shows a grid of burial plots with names and numbers. The orientation is east/west, with two main north-south paths. The map is divided into several sections, with names and numbers written in the plots. The map is aged and has a yellowish tint.

Section	Plot	Name	Plot	Name	Plot	Name
Top Left	1	WILSON	11	WILSON	21	WILSON
	2	WILSON	12	WILSON	22	WILSON
	3	WILSON	13	WILSON	23	WILSON
	4	WILSON	14	WILSON	24	WILSON
	5	WILSON	15	WILSON	25	WILSON
	6	WILSON	16	WILSON	26	WILSON
	7	WILSON	17	WILSON	27	WILSON
	8	WILSON	18	WILSON	28	WILSON
	9	WILSON	19	WILSON	29	WILSON
	10	WILSON	20	WILSON	30	WILSON
Top Middle	31	WILSON	41	WILSON	51	WILSON
	32	WILSON	42	WILSON	52	WILSON
	33	WILSON	43	WILSON	53	WILSON
	34	WILSON	44	WILSON	54	WILSON
	35	WILSON	45	WILSON	55	WILSON
	36	WILSON	46	WILSON	56	WILSON
	37	WILSON	47	WILSON	57	WILSON
	38	WILSON	48	WILSON	58	WILSON
	39	WILSON	49	WILSON	59	WILSON
	40	WILSON	50	WILSON	60	WILSON
Top Right	61	WILSON	71	WILSON	81	WILSON
	62	WILSON	72	WILSON	82	WILSON
	63	WILSON	73	WILSON	83	WILSON
	64	WILSON	74	WILSON	84	WILSON
	65	WILSON	75	WILSON	85	WILSON
	66	WILSON	76	WILSON	86	WILSON
	67	WILSON	77	WILSON	87	WILSON
	68	WILSON	78	WILSON	88	WILSON
	69	WILSON	79	WILSON	89	WILSON
	70	WILSON	80	WILSON	90	WILSON
Middle Left	91	WILSON	101	WILSON	111	WILSON
	92	WILSON	102	WILSON	112	WILSON
	93	WILSON	103	WILSON	113	WILSON
	94	WILSON	104	WILSON	114	WILSON
	95	WILSON	105	WILSON	115	WILSON
	96	WILSON	106	WILSON	116	WILSON
	97	WILSON	107	WILSON	117	WILSON
	98	WILSON	108	WILSON	118	WILSON
	99	WILSON	109	WILSON	119	WILSON
	120	WILSON	121	WILSON	131	WILSON
Middle Middle	132	WILSON	142	WILSON	152	WILSON
	133	WILSON	143	WILSON	153	WILSON
	134	WILSON	144	WILSON	154	WILSON
	135	WILSON	145	WILSON	155	WILSON
	136	WILSON	146	WILSON	156	WILSON
	137	WILSON	147	WILSON	157	WILSON
	138	WILSON	148	WILSON	158	WILSON
	139	WILSON	149	WILSON	159	WILSON
	140	WILSON	150	WILSON	160	WILSON
	161	WILSON	171	WILSON	181	WILSON
Middle Right	182	WILSON	192	WILSON	202	WILSON
	183	WILSON	193	WILSON	203	WILSON
	184	WILSON	194	WILSON	204	WILSON
	185	WILSON	195	WILSON	205	WILSON
	186	WILSON	196	WILSON	206	WILSON
	187	WILSON	197	WILSON	207	WILSON
	188	WILSON	198	WILSON	208	WILSON
	189	WILSON	199	WILSON	209	WILSON
	190	WILSON	200	WILSON	210	WILSON
	211	WILSON	221	WILSON	231	WILSON
Bottom Left	232	WILSON	242	WILSON	252	WILSON
	233	WILSON	243	WILSON	253	WILSON
	234	WILSON	244	WILSON	254	WILSON
	235	WILSON	245	WILSON	255	WILSON
	236	WILSON	246	WILSON	256	WILSON
	237	WILSON	247	WILSON	257	WILSON
	238	WILSON	248	WILSON	258	WILSON
	239	WILSON	249	WILSON	259	WILSON
	240	WILSON	250	WILSON	260	WILSON
	261	WILSON	271	WILSON	281	WILSON
Bottom Middle	282	WILSON	292	WILSON	302	WILSON
	283	WILSON	293	WILSON	303	WILSON
	284	WILSON	294	WILSON	304	WILSON
	285	WILSON	295	WILSON	305	WILSON
	286	WILSON	296	WILSON	306	WILSON
	287	WILSON	297	WILSON	307	WILSON
	288	WILSON	298	WILSON	308	WILSON
	289	WILSON	299	WILSON	309	WILSON
	290	WILSON	300	WILSON	310	WILSON
	311	WILSON	321	WILSON	331	WILSON
Bottom Right	332	WILSON	342	WILSON	352	WILSON
	333	WILSON	343	WILSON	353	WILSON
	334	WILSON	344	WILSON	354	WILSON
	335	WILSON	345	WILSON	355	WILSON
	336	WILSON	346	WILSON	356	WILSON
	337	WILSON	347	WILSON	357	WILSON
	338	WILSON	348	WILSON	358	WILSON
	339	WILSON	349	WILSON	359	WILSON
	340	WILSON	350	WILSON	360	WILSON
	361	WILSON	371	WILSON	381	WILSON



2. Administrative processes

Whilst the Clerk has been passed documentation relating to the Cemetery and the records are in order, clear processes have not been recorded for dealing with cemetery processes, e.g. requests for the following:

- Burials
- Interment of Ashes
- Exclusive Right of Burial
- Rights of Interment of second burial in existing plot
- Rights of Interment of ashes in existing plot
- Burial of children
- Headstones
- Memorials/ engravings/ plaques
- Added inscriptions to existing headstones etc
- Transfer of ownership of a grave

Whilst much of this may be quite straightforward, there are elements, such as receiving authority for the burial, which require a certificate from the Registrar of Births and Deaths, or the coroner's burial order before the burial takes place.

There needs to be clarification of what exactly an 'Exclusive Right of Burial' includes. See evidence D.

ALCA was approached for advice and they suggested talking to other Clerks who managed cemeteries. One Clerk has been contacted and another Clerk was happy to be contacted. Contacting the local funeral directors for advice may also be of use.

3. Publicly available information

There is currently limited information available about the Cemetery on the website, see evidence E.

4. Review of costs and fees

Cemetery income

2017/18 - £130

2018/19 - No income

2019/20 - £400

2020/21 - £675

Average income = approximately £300/year

Cemetery expenditure

2018/19 - £3088 – grass cutting and headstone maintenance check

2019/20 - £1350 – grass cutting

2020/21 - £1590 – grass cutting and grave clearance

Average expenditure = approximately £2000/year

(Note grass cutting is calculated as 50% of James Lock's grass cutting costs).

Costs outstrip the income received from burials/interments. This is not unusual - Haycombe Cemetery refers to the fact that "the costs of Exclusive Right of Burial are "heavily subsidised" to try to keep this option available to all those who wish for a family burial plot.

"In all cases, however, there is likely to be a mismatch between costs and income. Fees and charges should therefore be reviewed regularly, preferably annually, at the time the burial ground budget is fixed. Pressures on budgets will be increased where the proportion of old graves is greater than the number of new graves that can be opened, especially where the maintenance costs of older graves and an established site environment can be expected to be disproportionately higher."

Does the PC accept that we should continue to subsidise the maintenance of the cemetery? The fact that responsibility for the maintenance of graves rests with the family almost inevitably results in neglect in the long term and the responsibility and associated costs shifting to the parish council. Costs and fees could be reviewed on an annual basis.

For example fees from local cemeteries and the natural burial site, Midford, see evidence F.

5. Are people able to choose plots or should plots be allocated by the Parish Council?

Where an Exclusive Right of Burial is in existence or is thought to exist then a person is entitled to be buried in that plot.

The rules of Haycombe Cemetery make clear that a plot will be allocated and that people are not free to choose a future plot in which to be buried. Other cemeteries seem to accept that those who reserve a plot and pay for it in advance may choose a plot. In Freshford some plots have been specifically chosen and are marked as reserved.

6. Professional check of headstones

A professional check of headstones was last undertaken in 2018. The stone masons should be able to advise of when it would be appropriate to undertake another check.

Regular review would ensure that the PC is aware of any remedial work that is required and can budget for this.

Haycombe Cemetery have a 5 year rolling programme. See evidence G.

7. Ecological maintenance of cemeteries

In line with the Parish Council's declarations of Climate and Nature Emergencies, consider how the Cemetery could be managed to maximise the ecological benefits of the site as appropriate in a cemetery. The Friends of Freshford have put forward proposals to increase the biodiversity of the site, including changes to mowing regimes that are underway, and these should be considered as part of this.

"It is important for burial ground managers to have regard to the environment provided or created for burials, friends and relatives, and visitors. Lawn cemeteries may reflect the requirements or expectations of many families and visitors, but their provision is primarily to meet the needs of the

managers and staff for ease of maintenance and minimising costs. There is considerable room for debate about the extent of provision of formal or informal planting and landscaping, and natural or wild-life opportunities."

See also:

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/resources/action-pack/section-a-managing-churchyards-burial-grounds/>

Haycombe Cemetery

"The cemetery plays host to deer, squirrels, pheasants and numerous species of birds, including kestrels and woodpeckers. Whilst these visitors add to the natural tranquillity of the site, they can occasionally damage flowers or bulbs left on memorials. Deer and squirrels in particular may eat roses and carnations, or dig up flower bulbs or corms, giving the impression that a grave site has been vandalised. We advise spraying flowers with a deterrent, such as curry powder mixed with washing up liquid, or choosing flowers and plants that are less attractive to these animals, such as alliums, daffodils, snowdrops and hyacinths."

8. Space availability in the long term

"Where demand is forecast to use all available grave space within the following 10 years, it would be prudent for managers intending to extend the life of the burial ground to seek additional land for this purpose without delay. Taking account of the time eded to obtain planning permission and raise the necessary finance, it would be prudent to allow as long a lead time as possible to ensure continuity of burial services."

It is not possible to give an accurate forecast of the date by which all available grave space will be taken up. The best one can hope for is to look carefully at the number of plots which remain available and having done that to get some sense of projecting the likely demand over say a period of ten years. There are a number of factors to be taken into account:

What land is still available for burials within the Cemetery?

In the main area there are some 25 plots though this needs to be subject to a more rigorous assessment. If the triangle of land to the south east of the bisecting path forms part of the cemetery (I think it does) and is consecrated land (I think it is) then more plots may be available. Some existing graves are double graves subject to existing Exclusive Rights of Burial which means that further burials can take place in those existing plots.

In the past 10 years some 20 burials have taken place and in addition ashes have been interred and marked with some small tablets laid on the grass.

While it is more likely to be the case that burials/interments take place in graves laid in the last twenty or so years it is not always the case. Only recently a request was received for ashes to be interred in the family grave - her father born in 1879 and buried in the `Cemetery in 1943. Her brother's death in 1944 in Normandy also remembered on the headstone. We do well to

remember and recognise these eternal links with the past which for many people take on added poignancy and reflection when visiting the cemetery.

The process of planning for consideration of a new cemetery should be considered.

An alternative view is that use is again made of grave plots which are over 100 years old - See:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/may/06/re-using-graves-means-uk-cemetery-will-never-run-out-of-space>

This approach is still in its infancy and requires considerable thought and consultation before any determination is made.

Could the path that runs through the cemetery be repositioned to run close to the boundary on the south west elevation in the cemetery triangle of land, then further burial plots might be allocated.

EVIDENCE

(A) From Bath Records Office:

"The cemetery is an roughly rectangular plot (60m x 45m) between the The Tynning and Freshford Lane about 200m west of High Street. The land slopes down from the south to the north. There are two gates on the southern side and a gate in Freshford Lane. The area is divided into consecrated and unconsecrated sections with, along the southern fence, a line of cremation plaques. Outside the southeastern gate is the village's war memorial."

(B) From the Bath Chronicle of Thursday 12-Dec-1872 p2:

FRESHFORD- Consecration of Cemetery.- Those of our readers who are acquainted with the beautiful village of Freshford may probably be aware that it was recently determined to supplement the churchyard with a cemetery. This course having been determined upon the usual steps were taken, a suitable piece of ground secured, and the arrangements were so advanced that it was determined to ask the Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells to consecrate it on Tuesday. The usual course of having divine service in the Church was adopted, and the parishioners assembled there for the purpose at 12.45, when it was found that his Lordship had not arrived as was expected by the 12.16 train. The large congregation waited for some time in the church, and then broke up into groups about the churchyard, hoping that his Lordship would arrive by the 2.22 train, but they were again doomed to disappointment. It was then decided to telegraph inquiries, in answer to which it was heard that he had left with the purpose of coming to Freshford, as previously arranged. By some means, however, it was rumoured that his Lordship had been seen at Devizes, and returned to see what the 3.26 train would bring forth, and this time they were rewarded by the presence of our good Bishop. The church bells at once struck out a glad peal of welcome, and the people flocked to take their place in the sacred edifice only to leave them directly they were settled, it being decided in consequence of the present shortness of the days to consecrate the cemetery before holding divine service. A procession of clergy, churchwardens, and parishioners, was formed, and the consecration service took place in the usual manner. . . .

(C) The Service of Consecration

Order of Service for the Consecration of a Burial Ground (Church of England)

When all are assembled, one of the Petitioners, or a representative of the Petitioners, will read aloud to the Bishop the Petition for Consecration and then hand the Petition to the Diocesan Registrar.

The Bishop

I am ready to grant your request. The Lord be with you.

People: And with thy spirit.

Bishop; Let us pray.

O Father of all, we pray to thee for those whom we love but see no longer. Grant them thy peace, let light perpetual shine upon them, and in thy loving wisdom and almighty power take them unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

The Bishop will then proceed to each corner of the ground to be consecrated.

He will be preceded by the Churchwardens (if present), bearing their staves of office, and followed by the Registrar, the Minister (if present), and all other members of the congregation.

At each corner of the land to be consecrated the Bishop, using his staff, will mark the ground with the sign of the Cross and will say:

The Bishop The blessing of the Eternal God be upon this place to sanctify it and keep it holy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

The Bishop will return to the place from which he started and will read the Sentence of Consecration, after which:

The Bishop

By virtue of our authority in the Church of God we have now consecrated and set apart from all profane use this ground to be a resting place for the remains of those who have departed in the Lord: in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

People: Amen

Bishop: Hear the words of the Scripture: I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me: Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: Even so, saith the Spirit. For they rest from their labours.

The Bishop gives the Blessing

(D) What is an exclusive right of Burial?

From Haycombe Cemetery:

“When a grave is purchased, it refers to the purchasing of the Exclusive Right of Burial in a grave space and not the purchase of the land itself. This means that you do not own the land but have the right, during the period stated, to say who can be buried, or have cremated remains buried, in the grave space.

A Right can be purchased in advance, many people do this to have the reassurance that there will be a grave space for them in their chosen cemetery. In this way, you can reserve the right to be buried in a cemetery, however note that graves are allocated on the basis of the next available at the date of interment. Specific grave plots are not reserved.

The cost of an Exclusive Right of Burial does not include any interment costs, these fees are listed separately. The costs of interment relate primarily to the cost of digging the grave. Usually this service is carried out by the gravedigger instructed by Undertakers on behalf of the family. His costs will form part of the Invoice submitted by the Undertakers to the family and will be settled by them

We will provide you with a Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial and it is important that you keep this in a secure place as it is the only legal document confirming your entitlement to the Right. It is very important to notify us of any change of address so that we can contact you regarding the cemetery or grave space.”

How long does it last? 50/75/100 years

If granted and paid is an additional charge for interment still payable? Yes - see above.

(E) Cemetery Information on Freshford Community Website

RULES AND CHARGES

Residents of Freshford Parish have absolute right of burial (or interment of ashes) in Freshford Cemetery.

Former Residents of Freshford Parish may be buried (or their ashes may be interred) in Freshford Cemetery if:

1. The burial (or interment of ashes) is to be in an existing family grave.
2. They had lived in Freshford Parish for at least 15 years and had thereafter lived outside the Parish for less than 10 years.

Any other burials (or interment of ashes) are at the discretion of Freshford Parish Council.

CHARGES

		Freshford resident	Freshford non-resident
Plot Purchase	Grave	£400	£1,100
	Ashes	£200	£505

Note: Headstones etc. for graves or interred ashes should be in keeping with existing ones in the cemetery so far as material, size and colour are concerned.

(F) Examples of Fees from other Local Cemeteries

Haycombe

Interment and right of interment fees

The majority of the cost of a burial is in the purchasing of a right of interment (a long lease on a personal or family grave). You can read more about what this involves on our page on [choosing and managing a burial plot](#). The right of interment fee varies, depending on the duration of the lease and the type of grave you choose. As there is pressure on space in all cemeteries, there is a reduced fee payable when the deceased was a resident of Bath and North East Somerset, with a full fee payable for those who lived elsewhere. Please see our page on [burial options at Haycombe](#) for more information on the choices available.

The fees below refer to burial plots for people who were aged 17 or more when they died. Unless you are buying a right of interment for a new family burial plot, babies and children (up to and including age 16) are buried in a special designated area of Haycombe, and there is no fee for the right of interment.

Standard and green burial graves

With these graves, there is often the option to have a deeper interment, so that a partner or family member can also be buried in the same plot at a later date. We charge for the interment separately, so you can choose the option which suits your family's needs.

Right of interment duration	B&NES residents	Non-B&NES residents
30 years	£977	£1954
50 years	£1624	£3248
75 years	£2040	£4080
99 years	£2352	£4704
Interment fees		
Single depth		£701
Double depth (where this is possible)		£874

Mendip,Somerset	Current Fee
Cemeteries	
Exclusive right of burial	£586
Burial single	£586
Burial double	£689
Burial cremation	£208
Burial Right - Child	£76
Exclusive Right	£586
Exclusive Right (crem)	£362
Pre purchase of plot	£776
Pre purchase (crem plot)	£517
Headstone	£228
Flat or desk tablets	£153
Second inscription	£57
Photograph	£0
Slab or ledger*	£373
Kerbs in addition to above*	£373
Total surround including headstone	£531
Vase	£59
Register Search	£59
Service in Chapel (Shepton or Street)	£45
Plaque (Shepton or Street)	£46

Natural Burial Site, Midford

Prices

Prices are reviewed annually on 1st April.

Natural Burial Plot

Ashes Interment Plot

Combining extra ashes with an interment

Ashes Scattering (no longer permitted under APHA regulations)

£1200

£615

£200

£ N/A

Registration Fee

(payable at the time of the burial)

Burial Registration Fee

Ashes Registration Fee

£200

£200

Grave Digging Fees

(payable at the time of the burial)

Natural Burial Plot	£1200
Ashes Interment Plot	£615
Combining extra ashes with an interment	£200
Ashes Scattering (no longer permitted under APHA regulations)	£ N/A

Burial Registration Fee	£200
Ashes Registration Fee	£200

Weekday burial	£500
Weekday ashes burial	£150
Saturday burial	£tba
Saturday ashes burial	£tba
Sunday/Bank Holiday burial or ashes (by special arrangement)	
Memorials	
Slate Memorial plaque (25 yrs)	£280

(G) Checking of gravestones

Haycombe Cemetery

“As the landowner in council-maintained cemeteries, we are responsible for the safety of staff and visitors, and are committed to taking a number of health and safety measures.

Our Bereavement Services team carries out a 5-year rolling programme of memorial safety testing. We don't have the right to restore memorials, but we are responsible for making our cemeteries safe places to visit. Therefore, we can lay down any memorials (or parts of memorials) that our tests show to be in danger of falling. Falling memorials can smash, or cause nearby monuments to smash, so we take this responsibility very seriously.

If our tests show that a memorial is unstable, we will take the following steps (as agreed with the Chancellor and the Diocese of Bath and Wells):

- Notify the owner by letter on the same day as the test (if still living)
- Attach a warning sign to the memorial
- Prop with a wooden stake (if in an open cemetery: Haycombe or Harptree) or lay the memorial down with the inscription clearly visible (if in a closed cemetery or churchyard)
-

We will only lay down memorials where our responsibility to public safety makes this essential. Where possible, we will make every effort to work together with conservation societies, to achieve the restoration of memorials which have fallen into disrepair. For further information on our role as custodians of our region's cemeteries and burial grounds, contact the [Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Managers](#) (ICCM).