

Processes and Procedures

Excavation of Graves

The excavation of graves shall be undertaken using the process and procedures: -

- Upon receipt of the 'Instruction for Preparation of Burial', the Cemetery Management Team shall undertake relevant checks, which relate to names and location for interment, with any anomalies or concerns to be immediately relayed to the relevant Client Officer where necessary.
- Working in Partnership with the Client Officer, the relevant grave shall be marked out in full, ready for excavation, with all due steps taken to ensure spacing and alignment are precise. Care shall also be taken to ensure that sufficient additional measurement is allowed for the inclusion of grave shoring.
- Prior to the commencement of any works a Site Specific Risk Assessment shall be produced. As well as measuring the risk to carrying out the excavation, consideration shall also be given to the access to the grave, the safe method of operation, the positioning of the soil box, the creation of the burial platform and of course the safety of the public. Consideration shall also be given as to PPE, which shall include safety footwear, hard hats, gloves, overalls and where a mechanical digger is in operation – ear defenders.
- Where the excavation is adjacent to memorials, immediate steps must be taken to prevent damage to those memorials. In certain cases, this may mean seeking approval to dismantle a memorial; in such circumstances, this shall only be undertaken with the express approval of the Client officer and arrangements must be made for the prompt return and safe repositioning by a qualified mason.
- Prior to the commencement of the excavation, all tools and equipment must be present and available for use. Furthermore, wherever shoring is in use it shall have been checked on a weekly frequency as to its condition and in particular the operational capacity of the hydraulic rams.
- Excavation shall be carried out to the centre of the grave space, ensuring a minimization of additional risk of collapse.
- Turf shall be lifted and re-used elsewhere within the cemetery.
- Soil boxes shall be erected, in line with the approved Risk Assessment and checked as secure. Soil boxes shall be located at a sufficient distance from the edge of the grave so as to minimize risk of collapse or fallback. Where a hand-dig, 'walk boards' shall be installed along either side of the grave.

- Heavy clay soil can increase the risk of collapse and where necessary additional wooden struts shall be used to protect the security of the soil box.
- Excavation shall be either by hand or by machine digging, depending upon whether access is available and safe, as well as, whether it is a new or re-opened grave. In any event, it shall be two-person operation, with care taken to ensure the safety of members of the public and the accuracy of the dig. All sides shall be square and vertical, with spoil deposited into the soil box (In certain unique circumstances, spoil will need to be completely removed from the location; in such circumstances, this shall be to the compound, taking care to ensure that there is no deterioration to roads and paths due to soil from tyres. Where this does occur it shall be immediately removed.).
- Any surplus soil shall be removed (as above).
- During the excavation process care must be taken to note any undue matter, such as the discovery of remains or a risk or actual collapse. In any these circumstances work shall cease and the matter should be immediately referred to the Relevant Client Officer for guidance. During this time an operative must remain at the site for safety purposes.
- As the excavation progresses, grave shoring shall be installed by trained operatives.
- Once a depth of 90mm has been reached (during a hand dig) access and egress must only be made using a ladder. All ladders must be regularly checked for suitability or deterioration and replaced as necessary. In no circumstances should an operative use the shoring as an aid to climbing out of, or descending into the grave.
- As the excavation approaches the prescribed depth, regular checks must be undertaken so as to ensure the preparation is accurate. Should an obstruction arise, which prevents the full preparation of the grave this shall also be referred to the relevant Client Officer for a decision on how to progress.
- Once the excavation is complete then the grave shall be fully covered by suitable boards to prevent risk for the public. If for any reason, during the excavation, the grave is left unattended, then the grave shall also be fully covered and all tools removed from site.
- At the completion of the work the entire surrounding area shall be fully cleaned and made safe.

The usage of a mechanical digger, the installation of grave shoring and acting as banks-man are key activities, which must only be undertaken by properly trained and accredited employees.

Excavation of Re-Opened / Reserved Graves

All processes and procedures are undertaken, as detailed in *Excavation of Graves* above, with the following additions; -

- Mechanical digging shall not be a consideration.
- Care shall be taken when approaching the depth of the previous interment, ensuring an avoidance of damage to previously interred remains.

Exhumation

All processes and procedures are undertaken, as detailed in ***Excavation of Graves*** above, with the following additions; -

- Work shall only progress with the relevant paperwork in place; i.e. the license issued by the Home Office or the Faculty issued by the Church Authority.
- Work will only commence following the erection of suitable and approved screening, which is used to prevent public view of the exhumation site.
- Suitable lifting equipment shall be engaged as necessary to remove the coffin/remains from the grave. Excess soil shall be cleared from the remains/coffin.
- Freshly ground lime and disinfectant shall be used as required.
- The removed remains shall be carefully placed in a container supplied. All other items, which are removed from the grave, shall be treated and disinfected.
- Should any other remains require removal (to attain access) then such remains shall be returned to the grave in the same position.
- All operatives involved with the process shall be supplied with specific PPE (goggles, disposable coveralls, gloves, etc. all of which disposed of following the completion of the procedure).
- Wherever possible, the procedure shall be arranged outside normal hours, seeking to achieve completion, outside the view of the general public.

Cremated Remains

Cremated Remains shall be treated in various manners, dependent upon into which medium the interment is going to be made. This will include into earth, vault or gravelled areas; or indeed scattered.