

CEMETERY & CHURCHYARD REPORT

2023/2024

Churchyard

The churchyard is managed by Stowupland Parish Council as a "Closed Churchyard" which means no further burials will take place in the churchyard. The Parish Council work with the Parochial Church Council to maintain it from a safety rather than aesthetic point of view. The grass is cut as part of the contract for all Parish Council land around the village. The grass along the side ditch is not cut until the daffodil foliage has died down and the area under the Horse Chestnut tree will be left until later in the season to give the mass of cowslips there a chance to bloom and set seed.

The hedges and some shrubs are cut under contract either once, twice or three times during the year depending on need. The Parish Council are also responsible for checking the stability of all memorials in both the Churchyard and Cemetery. This is normally carried out at the start of the year.

In addition to this the Parish Council has approved 10hrs of paid work in the Churchyard and this is used primarily to clear up after leaf and conker fall and after any storms that bring down any dead wood from the trees. The Parish Council pays for one brown bin in the Churchyard to dispose of this debris.

Cemetery

Over the last few years lots of work has been carried out in the cemetery and this work continues. Shrubs removed, trees trimmed and covered seating areas installed. The hedges and grass are all cut under contract and we have a caretaker who attends once a fortnight to clear away dying flowers and debris. Snowdrops and daffodils have been planted to add a dash of colour in the spring as well as valuable nectar for early emerging pollinators. These areas are left uncut until all foliage has died down. Three new trees have been planted as well as hedging whips at the rear and sides of the Cemetery. Fingers crossed to see if the hedge whips have survived last summer's heatwave.

The cemetery is designated a Lawn Cemetery and as such all flowers are required to be placed close to any headstone on either a grave or Ashes Internment plot. No glass or ceramics are allowed as these could be dangerous for the grass cutter and visitors if damaged. We have this year agreed that if items are placed away from the headstone the grass cutter can remove these and place in front of the headstone. We have had a few issues with the cutting of the grass and we have asked for the grass cutters to quote for removing all of the grass as they mow. All memorials are checked annually for stability and if the Parish Clerk has details of the family they will be contacted and asked to repair the memorial. The family not the Parish Council are responsible for the maintenance of memorials. If there are no contact details the memorial will be laid flat on the grave /ashes plot.

Cemetery Policy and costs of burial/ashes internment are reviewed annually using other local cemetery pricing schedules for comparison. These fees were increased from January 2024 and because of our lack of space we will only be able to take burials for residents or those that have a close connection to the village.

The faster the village grows the quicker the burial space in the cemetery is used up. There is space for two more rows of ashes internments in the area currently being used and then a start will need to be made on the area on the other side of the cemetery. It will be burial space that is a problem for the future. The Parish Council has approached the owner of the field behind the cemetery to see if it could be available for sale but the owner has refused at present. There are rules about how close to a water source burials can take place and ditches are considered water courses so allocating space for burials can be tricky.

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March 2024