

Monk Hesleden Parish Council

Cemetery information and regulations



Hesleden Cemetery, Photograph Courtesy of Anne Whitehead

The information in this document applies to Blackhall and Hesleden cemeteries which are managed by Monk Hesleden Parish Council.

If you need further information or advice, please contact our Cemeteries Officer, A Peace, during working hours on 07956 211518 or contact

Monk Hesleden Parish Council

Blackhall Resource Centre, 68 Middle Street, Blackhall Colliery, Co Durham TS27 4EA

Office opening times are:

Monday to Friday 9.00am to 1pm

Tel: 0191 5184900

E-mail admin@monkhesledenparishcouncil.gov.uk

The Council reserves the right to amend any of the cemetery rules and regulations or fees and charges at any time.

General cemetery regulations

Cemetery Grounds will be opened to the public from 8.30 am until dusk.

The Council may temporarily close the whole or any part of the Cemetery Grounds as often as, in the opinion of the Council, such closure is desirable.

Conduct in the Cemetery

- No vehicles shall be allowed in the cemetery, excepting for funeral directors, contractors, stonemasons.
- Vehicular disabled access will be given subject to reasonable request.
- Not to obstruct or interfere with employees of the Council in the execution of their duties or to interfere with any burial taking place in a cemetery.
- Not to wilfully create any disturbance in the cemetery or behave in a way that may be a nuisance to others.
- Not to enter or remain in a cemetery after it has closed to the public. No person is permitted to be in the cemetery outside of opening hours.
- To enter the cemetery using the entrances provided.
- Not to pull or cut shrubs or flowers growing within the cemetery or to interfere with any grave or memorial.
- Not to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Not to play games or sports in a cemetery.
- To keep to footpaths and driveways and generally to respect the cemetery at all times.
- To keep dogs on a leash at all times. The visitor in control of the dog must remove any dog waste from the cemetery, with the exception of a guide dog accompanying a blind person.
- Not to bury pets or scatter ashes of pets in the cemetery.
- Not to offer Council employees any gifts or gratuity.
- To ensure children under the age of 14 years are accompanied by a responsible adult whilst in the cemetery.

Exclusive Right of Burial - Registration & Transfer

Please note this section contains important information: please read it carefully.

An exclusive right of burial is where someone purchases the rights to a particular grave plot.

The right of burial is given for 99 years and is in the form of a deed, it is for the plot, not the land itself, ownership of which remains with the Council.

When the registered owner of a 'right' of burial dies, the person organising the burial must provide satisfactory proof of title, usually a copy of the deed that was issued when the right of burial was purchased. At the time of arranging the funeral of the current deed holder, it is recommended that the deed be transferred to another family member to assist with the smooth organisation of future burials.

It is also important to inform the Council of any change of address so that the owner can be contacted about any problems, such as damage to a memorial or when the exclusive right of burial is due for renewal.

If no burial takes place during the purchased period (99 years) and the Council has not received a request for renewal from the owner of the right of burial, then the Council may grant a renewed right of burial to another person. Every reasonable effort will be made to notify the previous owner of the right, or his personal representative, and give the option of renewal first.

The owner of a right of burial can also give up their right to the Council before the 99 years is up. The Council will determine any payments that may be due.

You may transfer your right of burial with the approval of the Council; this will/may incur a transfer fee. You will need to prove to the Council that you are the owner of the right and the Council will not permit the purchase of a grave by a resident to be transferred to a non-resident in order to avoid the additional fee charged.

If you receive a 'right' of burial through a will you must contact the Council to arrange the transfer. This will incur a transfer fee.

Fees and Charges

Fees and charges are reviewed annually with an implementation date of revised fees being 1st April each year. Copies of current fees and services are located in appendix 1 and on the Parish Council website www.monkhesledenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Residents of the Parish of Monk Hesleden are defined as:

1. A resident is a person who resides or has resided in the Parish of Monk Hesleden during the previous 12 months
2. A member of the armed forces will be deemed a resident if their permanent address is within the Parish
3. A person who was a resident and has left for reasons of care will be deemed a resident
4. The Council reserves the right to require proof of residency for example a Council tax bill or Electoral Roll entry.

All fees and charges must be paid in advance to the Cemetery Officer, except where an agreement is in place with the Council.

Selection and purchase of Graves

There are two types of graves available in the cemeteries:-

Purchased Grave

A purchased grave is one where the Exclusive Right of Burial has been bought to allow for the interment of one coffin plus a cremated remains casket or up to two caskets containing cremated remains.

Cremated Remains Grave

This is a smaller purchased grave which allows the interment of up to two appropriate caskets containing cremated remains.

Cremated remains should not be scattered in the cemetery even if exclusive rights of burial have been granted.

Grave spaces can be purchased for burial by contacting the Cemetery Officer or the Parish Council office, the Council will allow purchases prior to interment and payment should be made at this time, when a grave deed will be issued as proof of ownership.

Graves are sold in rotation and allocation is at the discretion of the Cemetery Officer and limited to a row in which the graves are currently being prepared.

A maximum of two graves may be purchased, the Council, will in exceptional circumstances, give consideration to requests which may exceed this limit.

Burial Arrangements

A minimum of two complete days' notice (not counting Saturday, Sundays or public holidays) of any proposed interment must be given to the Cemetery Officer in writing on the form prescribed by the Council.

The relevant Registrar's certificate for Burial of the person to be buried must be produced prior to the burial.

Certificates required :

- Coroner's Order of Burial in cases where an inquest has been held.
- Certificate of Cremation for the interment of cremated remains.
- Certificate of the Register of Births and Deaths for a still born child.
- Certificate given by a doctor or midwife for the burial of foetal remains

No interment will be allowed to take place until the relevant certificate has been received.

Interments shall normally take place during the following hours:

Monday - Thursday	11.30am - 3.30pm
Friday	10.30am - 2.30pm

Consideration will be given to Saturday interments between the hours of 10.00am to noon. A minimum five working days' notice will be required and Saturday interments will incur additional fees, please see Appendix page 14.

Please note that the Council may not always be in a position to accommodate the requested time or date.

Acceptance of Interment

The body of any deceased person will not be accepted for interment unless it is enclosed within a coffin, casket or container of a type and style approved by the Council.

The name of the deceased must be suitably inscribed on the coffin, casket or container.

A coffin, casket or container or any part thereof shall not be removed from the Cemetery after the deceased has been conveyed there for burial.

Funeral directors are responsible for the health and safety of everyone involved in the burial. The handling of the coffin should have been risk assessed in accordance with the Manual Handling Operations 1992. In particular funeral directors must provide enough bearers to safely carry the coffin or casket from the hearse to the grave and also to lower.

All graves will be prepared by Council employees who shall determine the depth of grave; only one adult body may be buried in any grave space.

After the Burial

Backfilling of graves will not normally begin until the mourners are making their way out of the cemetery.

Graves are left slightly mounded to allow for settlement and flowers delivered at the time of the burial will be carefully placed on the grave by the person who has arranged the funeral once the backfilling has been completed.

Seeding over of the grave plot will be carried out by cemetery staff following a period of settlement over a minimum period of twelve weeks during which time the grave will be topped up with soil as necessary.

Settling of graves may take longer than twelve weeks depending on weather and ground conditions.

Any plants or items found on the area to be seeded will be carefully relocated to the memorial area at the head of the plot to allow seeding to take place.

Mourners are respectfully advised not to place ornaments or plants on the grave during this settlement time as weather and ground conditions can result in rapid overnight settlement.

Grant holders are requested to remove any wreaths or flowers that were placed on a grave after the funeral as soon as they become wilted. Council employees, at the direction of the Parks & Facilities Manager, may remove wilted flowers or wreaths which have not been removed by visitors.

Lawn Graves & Memorial Area

All surfaces will be turfed flat with an area for the memorial to be erected; all graves must be purchased for a memorial to be installed.

No earth mound will be permitted and no flowers, shrubs, plants or trees will be permitted on any grave space. No grave space shall be enclosed with fences, kerbs or gravel surrounds. Monk Hesleden Parish Council has the authority to remove any item which contravenes these without prior notification.

Kerbstones are not permitted

The turfed area shall be maintained solely by the Council. Maintenance staff may not be able to cut grass around planted or decorated graves where access is restricted as to do so may cause damage to items placed in or on grave plots. The Parish Council cannot accept any responsibility damage to any plants or other items placed in or around graves.

Permanent Memorials

Memorials may only be placed on a grave space for which the exclusive right of burial has been purchased.

A memorial will not be permitted until a period of six months following the interment or at the discretion of the Cemetery Officer, this period allows for the ground to settle.

All memorials and inscriptions are subject to the approval of the Cemetery Officer, no work shall be carried out before this approval and a memorial permit is issued by the Council.

An application on the prescribed form signed by the owner and the person, who is to carry out the works, is to be forwarded to the Council with payment.

Monumental work will only be permitted during normal working hours and must be supervised by a Council employee.

No memorial or part thereof shall be removed from the Cemetery without prior approval of the Cemetery Officer.

No memorial shall be erected if there are no remains interred in the grave.

Memorial Masons must be properly insured for any undertaking of work in the Cemeteries.

Any memorial erected in contravention of these regulations may be removed and the cost of removal charged to the person who erected it.

Memorial specifications

All stonemasons carrying out memorial work in the Council's cemeteries must adhere to the code of working practice issued by the National Association of Memorial Masons.

Memorials and headstones can be made of:

- Natural granite
- Marble
- Sandstone
- Slate
- Limestone
- Other materials as approved by the Council's Cemetery Officer

All wooden crosses should be permanent structures, made of oak or teak only, stained, varnished and set in a concrete base by an authorised person.

Memorials must be supported and constructed to the satisfaction of the Cemetery Officer.

No memorial or foundation will be permitted which:

- Exceeds 3ft 6inches/ 1066mm
- Is less than 3 inches in depth (80mm)
- Exceeds the width of the grave

All headstones should be dowelled to the foundation slab and be supported on a minimum of 6 inches (150mm) of concrete.

The name of the Monumental Mason may be inscribed at the bottom left hand side of the rear of the memorial.

Every headstone or other memorial erected over a grave space should bear the number of the grave space inscribed on the side or rear of the headstone.

Vase and Flower Holders

Vases and flower holders may be placed on purchased graves without specific approval subject to the following conditions:

- The holder must be placed at the head of the grave so as not to impede grass cutting.
- The holder must not be made of glass or pottery.
- It must not be affixed to the grave or any memorial thereon.
- The holder is placed on the grave at the owners risk and the Council will not be liable in the event of its loss or damage however caused.
- Any vase or flower holder not complying with the Council's conditions will be treated as any other memorial for the purposes of the regulations.
- The holder is placed on the grave at the owners risk and the Council will not be liable in the event of its loss or damage however caused.
- It is suggested that the grave number is marked on the base of the flower holder so that if it is displaced it can be repositioned on the correct grave.

Maintaining Memorials

All memorials are the sole responsibility of the owner of the grave or their successor in title. They are responsible for the safety and upkeep of the memorial including any repairs needed caused by vandalism, storm, wind, lightning, cracking or subsidence of footings.

Owners may wish to arrange insurance to cover the cost of any future repairs; a reputable stonemason should be able to provide advice on this matter.

Memorials within the cemeteries are monitored for safety reasons and if a memorial is found to be in a dangerous condition, Monk Hesleden Parish Council will place a warning notice on the memorial for notification.

If the owner of the grave space cannot be traced or repairs are not carried out in a reasonable time, the Council may have to take one of the following courses of action:

- Carry out the necessary repairs to the memorial and may recover the cost thereof from the owner
- Remove and store the memorial or,
- Dismantle the memorial, lay the headstone flush with the ground or
- Remove and dispose of the memorial, if it is beyond repair.

Memorials are surveyed for safety regularly, if a memorial is found to be in a dangerous condition, it will be made safe immediately. The cost of this work may be charged to the owner of the grave, who in any case will be contacted if possible.

Cemetery Records

Plans of the Cemetery showing the various sections and individual grave spaces, together with the Burial Registers are available for inspection by contacting the Parish Council office. There is no charge for this service.

Grave Searches

Monk Hesleden Parish Council maintain the statutory burial records for both cemeteries, and receive many enquiries from members of the public wishing to locate the place of burial of their relatives.

If you wish to locate a member of your family, please contact the Parish Council on telephone number 0191 5184900 or via website www.monkhesledenparishcouncil.gov.uk. The information required to conduct the search includes:

- The full name of the deceased
- The approximate month/year that the person died
- Any further details that can be supplied to assist with the search

A fee of £10 is charged for each year searched.

Memorial Benches

The Council will accept the donation of memorial bench; however, the type and quality of the bench must be approved. Siting of benches is restricted to certain locations within the cemetery and is at the discretion of the Parks & Facilities Manager.

Any enquiries regarding the donation of a memorial bench should be made direct to the Parish Council.