



ACE Committee Meeting

Date: 16th February 2023

Number: ACE027 ii – To discuss the future strategy for the natural burial ground including the safekeeping, planning, maintenance and accuracy of future burial records

1. Introduction

Whilst Cuckfield is known for its popular and beautiful burial ground, there is much less awareness of the natural burial ground section and offering available to anyone who would prefer to be buried in this way. Due to the infrequent burials here (the last plot sold in this section was in 2015), a few issues have been allowed to develop which need to be addressed to maintain the integrity of this burial space.

Furthermore, it is necessary to reconsider how we manage this area going forwards from both a maintenance and publicity perspective.

2. Background

When this section was originally planned, it was measured out to allow 12 burials per row enabling a maximum of 48 graves to be interred. However, when the site was re-measured recently, the estimate was increased to 17 burials per row, with a total of 63 burials possible (the large tree in the first row will remove 3 of the potential graves).

All existing burials have no markings to identify them, which has made it challenging to identify the exact location of a grave. This is a particular issue for those which have been sold as double depth burials. When a grave was re-opened a couple of years ago it was found to be off-centre due to issues with the quality of the mapping.

The area has not been maintained regularly over recent years, although I am not aware of any specific maintenance policy for this section. The suggestion to plant wildflowers was made, but the soil is too rich so this will not be suitable. Should there be an interment a path must be mowed to the grave, with an area for mourners to stand, as well as 3 graves' width for the soil to be placed. Last time this was required, it took 2 or 3 days to clear.

3. Proposals

The following improvements could be made to the natural burial area:

- Firstly, the natural burial area could be promoted as an option when enquiries are received to purchase plots at the cemetery, with a separate section added to our rules and regulations booklet explaining this area, how it is used and what the benefits of a natural burial are.

- All plots sold should be single depth only, and the costs to purchase this should be included in our list of fees.
- Introduce the use of natural wooden grave markers to assist with future burials, as this will clearly indicate the location of existing graves.
- Keep the area tidy and regularly mown, improving the quality of the grass in this section and removing the weeds.
- Install concrete markers to show where each row is (it is possible to reuse ones from the older parts of the cemetery which are no longer required). Jeremy Batchelor has offered to do this as it will be of assistance to him when digging graves.
- Remap the area to include the additional graves identified, marking out the dimensions on the map so in future it will be easier to identify where to dig. This may require a change in grave numbers, so deed holders will be contacted with updated information where required.

4. Recommendations

In summary, it is recommended that the proposals above are considered and implemented with immediate effect. This area of the cemetery has long been neglected, whereas it could be a popular and well used section generating more income for the Parish Council due to the popularity of natural burial grounds in the local area.

Undertaking regular maintenance to ensure it looks more attractive and in keeping with the rest of the cemetery will only enhance the area as a whole.

Name: Shayne Hilbourne/Sam Heynes

Title Burial Registrar/Clerk

Date: 13th February 2023