

## QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

### BURIAL

#### **Why are graves dug so deep? (It's distressing to see the coffin go down so deep)**

Graves have to be dug to a sufficient depth to allow for future burials to take place. Therefore the grave needs to be deep enough to allow not only for the depth of coffins/caskets that will be buried but also to accommodate legal requirements of undisturbed earth to be between each coffin and the amount of earth that must cover the last interment.

#### **I have a lawn grave. Why can't I put a full memorial over the surface of the grave?**

The lawn grave was designed on the war grave principle (to have only a memorial of limited size at the head of the grave with the rest of the grave laid to lawn). In this manner the limited area available for burial is best utilised. In addition maintenance is easier to accomplish with large mowing machinery being used to keep the area in a neat condition. These graves are sold on the understanding that only lawn style memorials are erected. Full memorials are only permitted on traditional graves, which are also available at the City of Gloucester Cemetery.

#### **Are graves filled in straight after a funeral or are they left to the next day?**

Graves are prepared for burial at least one full day before the funeral and are covered overnight. The ICCM Guiding Principles for Burial Services states that immediately after the mourners have departed the graveside, the grave shall be entirely backfilled and made tidy. This work is completed on the day of the burial and coffins are not left uncovered overnight.

#### **I understand that some people wait while the grave is filled in. Why is this?**

Some cultures require that the grave is filled in while the family watch or they may wish to undertake the backfilling of the grave themselves. When families want this it is essential that the cemetery is made aware of their requirements when the burial is first arranged. This will ensure that the family's wishes are met.

#### **Can anyone witness the grave being filled?**

Yes, but we need to be advised of this before the funeral takes place so that we are prepared.

#### **I've got a lawn grave. When will I be able to put a memorial onto it?**

With lawn graves, 'almost' immediately. You've probably heard rumours that the grave needs to sink for a year, and so you must wait for that time before putting up a memorial. This is not strictly true with regard to lawn graves. With lawn graves the unit into which the headstone will be fixed is in position at the head of the grave before the funeral takes place. The grave itself will continue to settle for many months but the concrete unit at the head of the grave will not sink and is a firm foundation for the memorial to be fixed into.

#### **I own the grave - can anyone else be buried in it if I don't want them to?**

No. Graves cannot be opened without the permission in writing of the registered owner of the grave. The only exception to this is where the burial is to be that of the registered owner in which case no written authority is required.

#### **I am told the grave is for two people - there is only one person in the grave and I now want two more burials to take place in the grave.**

When a grave is purchased to take two full body burials, the depth to which the grave is excavated for the first burial must take into account the need for the second burial. There are legal requirements as to how much earth must be left on top of the last coffin, and it is therefore not physically possible to put an extra coffin into the grave without breaking the law.

#### **What happens when the lease expires?**

When you buy a grave you purchase the exclusive Rights of Burial in that grave for a set period of time. Should you not renew your lease options, then the exclusive rights of burial will eventually run out.

#### **What happens if / when all the owners have died?**

Ownership of the exclusive Right of Burial in a grave can be transferred from a deceased owner via that owner's estate. The means of transfer can be very complex and while there is a set procedure to follow, each case must be looked at individually. If you need to transfer ownership when all owners are deceased you will need to contact us.

### **Why can't I have what I want on the grave?**

When a new grave is purchased it is not the ownership of the land itself that is purchased, but the rights to have burials take place in that grave. These rights are sold, or to be more correct 'granted' together with the rights to erect a memorial on the grave in accordance with the rules and regulations of the City of Gloucester Cemetery.

### **Why is a permit needed?**

Prior to a memorial being erected on a grave space, the written authority of the owner of the grave must be given on the permit form, authorising the proposed erection. Memorials need to conform to cemetery regulations with regard to size and fixings, and the memorial also needs to be checked for stability under health and safety regulations.

### **I want to bury cremated remains into the grave. Why do I have to decide whether there will be any more burials before this can be done?**

It is against the law to disturb human remains without a licence (including cremated remains in a casket or urn), and therefore no further burials will be possible in the grave until a licence has been obtained. Cremated remains can be buried in the grave at full depth, in which case they will not be disturbed by further full body burials, but by having to excavate a grave to this depth there will be additional charges for opening the grave.

If you require any further assistance then please contact the cemetery staff on 01452 396902 between 9.00am and 4.30pm (Monday to Friday)  
Email: [heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk](mailto:heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk)