

Goudhurst Parish Council



BURIAL AUTHORITY

Minutes of a Meeting held at Goudhurst Burial Grounds on Tuesday 19 October 2021 at 5.00 pm

Present: Cllrs Antony Harris (Acting Chairman of the meeting), Phil Kirkby and Alison Webster.
Also Mr David Nichol (Adviser and Representative of the Friends of St Mary's) and Rev Rachel Robertson.

Apologies: Cllrs Mrs Caroline Richards (away travelling).

Absent: Cllrs Guy Sutton (did not receive the Calling Notice or Agenda due to IT failures) and Barry Noakes (misunderstood the time of the meeting and arrived after it had finished).

To receive questions and statements from the public and press. There were none.

Declarations of Interest. There were none.

Change of title from Burial Board to Burial Authority. The Deputy Clerk informed the meeting that on taking legal advice on the updated and re-written Regulations and Fees relating to the management of Goudhurst Burial Grounds, he learned that the term Burial Board is no longer in use. Many years ago when there was a change in law, the title Burial Board was no longer included in legislation. It was **agreed to recommend to Council** that the title Burial Authority be used henceforth.

Those present took the opportunity to walk the length of the Burial Ground. They **noted** that the area is being kept well mown, neat and tidy except for unauthorised items deposited on certain graves.

Unauthorised items on graves. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that Regulations limiting permitted items on graves had been in place for many years but had not been enforced by the old Burial Board. Members observed trees, shrubs, fencing, kerb stones, wire netting and toys. Members took the view that such non-observance of the regulations is causing offence to some other bereaved families but moreover it is obstructing the work of the grounds maintenance contractor.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that he could not confirm that all bereaved families had received a copy of the Regulations over the years because he has not met all of them. Quite frequently interments are handled by Funeral Directors in contact with Deputy Clerk. In such cases Deputy Clerk will send a copy of the Regulations to the Funeral Director but that does not mean that the Funeral Director will pass the regulations document to the bereaved family. However, it was noted that for more than the last 20 years the regulations have been posted on the notice board by the entrance gates to the Burial Ground.

It was **agreed to recommend** that Council will write to all the relevant Holders of Exclusive of Burial (the owners of each grave). Council will explain that the grave for which they are responsible is in a lawn area and that the condition of the grave is hampering the work of the grounds maintenance contractor. Council intends to return the area in question to a lawn area without obstructions.

Polished black marble memorials. Council has received a proposal that such memorials should no longer be approved for Goudhurst Burial Grounds. Such memorials are not in keeping with the

general Goudhurst scene. The meeting noted that there are several such black memorials existing in the Burial Grounds but their number is not intrusive. It was **agreed** not to recommend approval of the Proposal by Council.

Memorial headstone stability testing. As reported previously, Deputy Clerk is in touch with 3 specialists, 2 of whom will be visiting Goudhurst. Due to expected costs, this is likely to be a project for 2022-23.

Digitisation of Burial Records. It was **noted** that the Rialtas software has been purchased and is now installed appropriately on Council's desktops and laptops. 2 part-time casual volunteers have started work, each doing 2 to 3 hours separately on 1 morning a week each. Deputy Clerk will report progress to Council from time to time.

Clean-Up day at St Mary's and the Cemetery. Saturday morning, 09 October. A good turnout. As usual much was achieved. The organisers are thinking of hiring a chipper for the day next year to save Mr Will Thompson's time in positioning his giant trailer to Back Lane where parked vehicles cause difficulties.

Next Meeting.

To be advised. Likely to be mid-March 2022.

The meeting closed at 6.00 pm

Anthony Farnfield, Deputy Clerk