

MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP AND SCHEME OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE JOINT MEETING 25 JANUARY 2022

WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY – OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Covid 19 Response

Managing funerals has continued as the service priority since March 2020. At the peak of the pandemic through spring and summer 2020 we experienced up to a 120% increase in weekly funerals compared to 2019, with the service consequently stretched to the limit for several months. Funeral numbers are currently at a steady level, broadly back at pre-Covid numbers. There are some restrictions that remain in place for indoor services under current Government guidelines.

Burial numbers rose throughout 2020 as a result of the pandemic, with a 26% increase in grave re-opens.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for funerals and commemorative events during the coronavirus pandemic states that masks must be worn by law if attending an indoor funeral ceremony (updated 16 December 2021).

The office is accessible by appointment including to collect cremated remains. A video doorbell has been installed to safely manage enquiries. Staff presence remained on site throughout the pandemic. General enquiries such as deed transfers, memorial orders and searches were not progressed at key points in the pandemic when heightened funerals numbers were required to be managed. These have been resumed and the current position is that the backlog for 2020 has been cleared.

Landscapes Team

The team began the winter works programme at West Norwood Cemetery on 4 January. The works will cover strimming and cutting back the conservation area, removing self-sets and lifting low branches over paths; strimming the areas of bramble previously cleared around the Catacombs, Hellenic area and Ship Path; cutting laurel and removing ivy from the Hellenic section wall.

Preparation for Decant of Office (NHLF)

The team have been preparing for the proposed decant for the Visitor Centre works – older cremation papers are being digitised and condensed.

Trees

All memorial trees on site have been checked for health and lease terms, with queried trees having a sign installed for over a year to invite contact.

We have ascertained that in the first instance 21 trees can be removed, either because the lease has lapsed, or the tree is unhealthy and poses a safety risk. The Trees team will be required on site for most of these removals due to the height or dangerous branches.

Conifer Management

This project continues with many grave owners receiving contact asking them to remove the tree where Regulations have been breached. There are a large number across the cemetery so further letters or contact is required and ongoing. Several trees have already been removed in 2021.

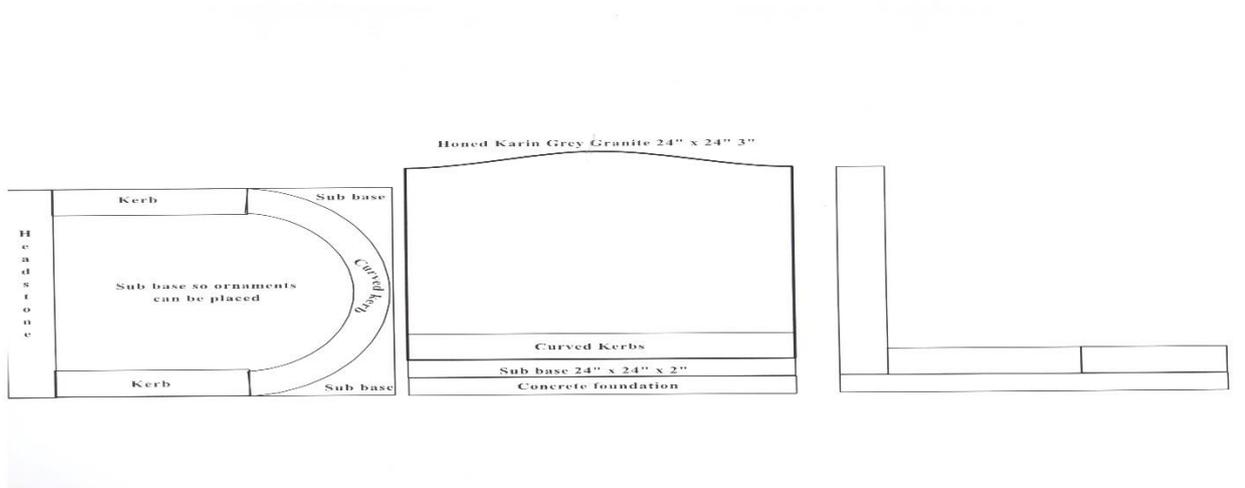
Memorial Safety

A SIAM (Safety Inspection and Assessment of Memorials) course was completed by 10 members of staff in late 2021, who now hold accreditation to Inspect and Assess Memorials.

There is further training booked on the purchased app that will record the memorial condition, but staff are beginning to assess memorials square by square where possible between other duties. The app links to the BACAS cemetery management system and can automatically generate letters to registered grave owners where safety works are required.

Stillborn Memorial

A Faculty application is required to move the current memorial to the Garden of Remembrance. The stone will be changed and the wording will need to be revised and agreed.



Current Wording

IN CHERISHED MEMORY / OF OUR BELOVED BABIES / FLEETINGLY KNOWN / BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN

Replacement Option 1

FOR ALL OUR BABIES / BRIEFLY KNOWN / FOREVER LOVED

Replacement Option 2

A SPECIAL PLACE IN MEMORY OF ALL BABIES WE HAVE LOST

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."

Replacement Option 3

IN LOVING MEMORY OF ALL BABIES LOST

To bud on earth and bloom in Heaven

Memorial Benches

The five benches scheduled for removal in 2021 have all been removed. A further five are down for removal during 2022.

Apprenticeship (NHLF)

NLHF apprentice Helen Mackenzie joined the team in July 2021. She is on site at West Norwood four days a week and attends Capel Manor for the remaining day.

Helen is currently working on assessing and removing the damaged box hedge in the Rose Garden area and has engaged with the Friends over horticultural projects.

Volunteer Working Parties

The weekly volunteer group from Dulwich College returned in October 2021, with a new team of students attending daily when the weather permits.

A group attends every lunchtime (Monday-Friday) and as agreed carry out general tidying, branch clearance and litter picking around the gate and front foyer.

Capital Projects (Bereavement Services)

Quotes are pending for various workstreams including Gilberts, many masons were closed or operating with reduced timetables during the pandemic so there have been some delays in obtaining prices.

There is an additional concern as material costs have escalated and extreme delays with shipping are now common across the industry for some stone and metal.

Capital Works are planned to replace the existing catafalque at West Norwood Crematorium in Spring 2022. Services will not be able to take place while these works are implemented, and funerals will be diverted to Lambeth Crematorium where possible.

Work was also completed on the wall at the crematorium for the Tate Memorial (pictures below).





Community Payback

The group returned in May 2021 and now operate two days a week. Numbers remain low due to their risk assessments to ensure close supervision and social distancing within rest areas.

The average group attendance is 4, tasks such as branch, leaf and litter collection are the main duties at this time.

There have been some breaks in attendance as the group could not attend during some parts of the NLHF project work on the surrounding roads and paths to the rest areas.

ICCM Charter for the Bereaved

Bereavement Services completed the annual assessment for the Charter for the Bereaved last July. The assessment is judged over all cemeteries and crematoria managed by Lambeth. The Gold award was achieved for both the crematorium process and burials.

London in Bloom

West Norwood Cemetery was re-entered in the Large Cemetery category in 2021 after a break of two years. With a combination of the new apprentice and the NLHF works we feel confident that a Gold award is achievable by 2023. For 2021 we secured a Silver Gilt award, with an improved score of 157 compared to 142 in 2018. 170 is needed for a Gold.

Green Flag

The cemetery retained Green Flag accreditation for 2021.

Cemetery of the Year

This award scheme was revived recently, and we entered West Norwood Cemetery in 2021. We didn't win but will continue to enter annually. The judges' feedback was received recently but is yet to be reviewed in detail.

Winter Memorial Service

The annual memorial service went ahead on 17 December. Bereaved families who have organised a service in the past year receive an invite, but all are welcome. Due to restrictions on events imposed by Lambeth's Public Health team we were unable to offer refreshments as is traditional.

Bereavement Services Team Staffing

The team is fully staffed, and the current structure is shown below.

