



## **SOUTHBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL**

# **SOUTHBOROUGH CEMETERY INFORMATION**

**CEMETERY DETAILS:** Southborough Cemetery  
Victoria Road  
Southborough  
Tunbridge Wells  
Kent TN4 0LS

Light will dictate permitted visiting times. Opening times are every day:

April to September            09:00 to 19:00  
October to March            09:00 to 16:00

Southborough Cemetery is CLOSED to vehicles on 26<sup>th</sup> December each year.

**COUNCIL DETAILS:** Southborough Town Council  
Southborough Civic Centre  
Council Office  
137 London Road  
Southborough  
Kent TN4 0NA

Tel: 01892 529176  
Fax: 01892 541402  
Website: [www.southborough-tc.gov.uk](http://www.southborough-tc.gov.uk)

Contact: Office Administrator  
Email: [admin@southboroughcouncil.co.uk](mailto:admin@southboroughcouncil.co.uk)

The Council Offices located at Southborough Civic Centre, 137 London Road, TN4 0NA are open to the public from 09:00 to 13:00 Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays and any other Public Holidays.

Afternoon appointments can be made by arrangement, with the office.

### **INFORMATION LEAFLET CONTENTS**

The following leaflet aims to give a brief introduction to Southborough Cemetery, including an outline of key regulations and responsibilities as well as information regarding how to arrange a burial and select and purchase a grave. The full list of regulations and charges are available from the Council Offices and can be downloaded from the Council website: <https://southborough-tc.gov.uk/>

Most importantly, this leaflet aims to make the process of arranging a burial or booking memorial work clear and simple, primarily for the bereaved but also for other cemetery users, such as Bereavement Service Providers and Council staff. Council staff are committed to providing improved customer service to the bereaved and other cemetery users, so please contact the Council Offices if you need to discuss any matter relating to the cemetery. The Council offer a sensitive and understanding approach in a respectful environment and therefore, we will always do our best to accommodate all requests, where possible, in addition to answering all queries.

## **CEMETERY REGULATIONS**

The Council believe in offering as much choice as possible to bereaved people and has attempted to keep regulations to a minimum. However, it is recognised that some regulations are necessary to ensure that the cemetery is a safe, attractive, and fitting place for all those who visit and work in it. Full copies of the Council's Burial Ground Regulations are available from the Council Offices and can be downloaded from the Council website: <https://southborough-tc.gov.uk/>. A brief summary of some of the regulations and other factors relating to the upkeep and working of the cemetery are given here.

Southborough Cemetery is a place of peace and quiet reflection, but it is also a workplace. Visitors to the cemetery are welcome but are asked to respect the nature of the site, the needs of other users and safety factors. Vehicles are permitted in the cemetery but must not exceed the speed limit of 10 mph and must stick to the main driveway, parking carefully so as not to cause an obstruction or any damage to any nearby graves or grassed areas. No dogs are permitted in the cemetery, with the exception of Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs or other recognised Assistance Dogs. Furthermore, a responsible adult must accompany children under 14 and any person creating a nuisance or disturbance, will be asked to leave the cemetery immediately.

We require co-operation in keeping the grassed areas free of pots, plants, and other artefacts. This is so that the grass can be cut using mowers without causing damage or risking injury to the operator and visitors from glass or plastic shards. The Council recognise that you may wish to leave tributes and therefore, will permit plants and suitable items to be placed at the head of the grave where they are at less risk of damage by mowing. We ask that vases be made from non-breakable material, as glass or ceramic pots will shatter during the winter due to any water inside them freezing. Broken glass or pottery presents a danger to visitors, staff, and wildlife in the cemetery.

Southborough Cemetery is a treasured community site and as such, we would ask that you choose items for your grave that are in-keeping and appropriate to the special nature of the site. Please note that if you place articles along the length of the grave, we will not be able to cut the grass for you and the grave may look untidy compared to those around it. If this gives rise to complaints, then the Council reserve the right to remove the articles and place them at the head of the grave or take them to the Council Offices for collection.

Additionally, in some instances, it may be necessary at some point in the future to excavate the grave surrounding yours. If so, we will need to place boards over the grave and a box to accommodate the soil and you therefore may not be able to visit the grave for a short while. Please be assured that this will only be necessary where there is no other option and that the grave will be tidied and returned to its usual condition as soon as the burial has taken place.

Most importantly, memorials on graves must be of good quality, hardwearing materials and must be approved by the Council before being fixed. Only BRAMM-accredited memorial masons will be allowed to undertake work in the cemetery, and they will require a work permit. Further information regarding memorial restrictions and applications is available from the Council Offices, and the Memorials Management Policy must be adhered to.

## **ARRANGING A BURIAL**

In most cases, an appointed Funeral Director will arrange the funeral on your behalf and in consultation with you, including burial arrangements. The Funeral Director will contact the Council Offices to arrange a date and will assist you in completing the necessary paperwork. In some circumstances, you may wish to make arrangements directly with the Council, such as with cremated remains, or when choosing a grave space. In such cases, please contact us and we can advise you on what you need to do.

The Council require at least five working days' notice for burials and all paperwork must be completed within this timeframe. A date can only be confirmed by contacting the Council Offices either via email or telephone. Please note that ownership must be established prior to a burial going ahead and if any transfer needs to take place beforehand (**See Transferring Grave Rights below**), extra documentation may need to be completed, which may require further investigation. Please contact the Council Offices as soon as possible if you have any queries regarding the ownership of a grave and we can assist you with the necessary documents.

### **GRAVE SELECTION AND PURCHASE**

Southborough Cemetery contains consecrated and unconsecrated sections, and you may choose which section is most appropriate for you. Sections 1, 2, 3 and 13 are unconsecrated whereas the rest of the sections are consecrated. When you purchase the grave, you will be given the opportunity to select a location, although final approval must rest with the Council. Graves can only be purchased when needed; they cannot be pre-purchased or reserved.

When you purchase a grave, you are purchasing the Exclusive Right of Burial only. The land still belongs to the Council. An Exclusive Right of Burial gives you control over who is buried in the grave. It also gives you the right to place a headstone or other type of memorial on the grave. In Southborough, you may purchase a grave for a period of 60 years. At the end of the lease, you will be given the opportunity to purchase further years. If you choose not to, the rights to the grave will revert back to the Council, which is entitled to remove any memorial. However, this is unlikely to happen unless the memorial poses a serious safety risk, as Southborough Town Council is committed to maintaining the beautiful aesthetic of the cemetery, of which the memorials form an integral part.

When you purchase a grave, the Council will issue you with a Deed of Grant. The Deed is a very important document and is your proof of ownership. You should keep the Deed in a safe place, as you will be asked to produce it when you ask for a future burial to take place or if you want a memorial placed on the grave. It is also important that the Council is made aware of any changes to your personal contact details, so that we can stay in contact with you and keep our records up to date.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL**

The Council will maintain graves to a high standard by cutting the grass around graves regularly and ensuring that graves are topped up and levelled should they sink. The Council will carry out periodic testing of the stability of any memorial on the grave and will contact you if there are any problems. The Council is not responsible for the maintenance of individual memorials.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF GRAVE OWNERS**

Grave owners are responsible for the safety and condition of any memorial on their grave. Although the Council has responsibilities under Health and Safety Legislation to ensure the safety of visitors and staff in the cemetery, the responsibility for the safety of individual memorials rests with the owner. If a memorial becomes dilapidated and/or unsafe, the Council has the right to remove it or make it safe. The cost for such work will be claimed back from the grave owner.

The Council undertake regular safety checks on all the memorials in Southborough Cemetery. The grave owner will be contacted where possible if a memorial is in need of work. The owner will then be given the option of having the work done themselves using a mason of their choice. However, the office must be notified of any memorial works and an approved memorial mason must carry out all works. The Council retains the right to remove the memorial if it becomes a serious safety risk.

## **TRANSFERRING GRAVE RIGHTS**

The owner of the Exclusive Rights of Burial may transfer or assign the Rights to another person if they choose to but this is subject to an administration charge. Further details can be obtained from the Council Offices or via our website.

A transfer must legally be completed once the grave owner has passed away. When an owner dies, they automatically have the right to be interred in their own grave and to have an inscription placed on an existing memorial (as long as this is carried out on-site). If the owner dies and subsequent burials are to take place, a new memorial is to be erected or an existing memorial needs to be removed for an inscription, then the Rights must be transferred beforehand. This is because the Rights to a grave must be in the legal possession of a living owner for any future burials or memorial work to take place (**Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977**).

It is possible for a grave owner to bequeath the Rights in their Will to a specific person, and this can make the process of transferring the Rights much simpler. If a specific person is not named, then a legal transfer can only be completed by submitting certain documents to the Council. If a transfer is necessary then the next of kin and/or the executor(s), if applicable, will need to contact the Council Offices and speak to the Admin Officer, who will advise and support them through this process. Please note that ownership does not automatically pass to the next of kin or executor.

## **COUNCIL RECORDS**

In 2010, Southborough Town Council embarked on a project to computerise all Southborough Cemetery Burial Records, dating back to 1903, to improve administrative procedures and also to assist the public with genealogy searches. The records can be viewed online by registering as a member at: **[www.deceasedonline.com](http://www.deceasedonline.com)**. It is possible that the records may contain some ambiguities due to the way they were kept over the last century, so please contact the Council Offices if you have any queries or need a member of staff to carry out a confirmatory check.

Please contact the Council Offices if you have any further queries or visit our website for more information: <https://southborough-tc.gov.uk/>

**Last updated 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024**