

## **DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Memorial testing**

**Dorchester Town Council will shortly be undertaking a programme of memorial testing at Poundbury Cemetery, Dorchester Cemetery and Fordington Cemetery. The work is necessary to ensure the safety of those visiting or working in Dorchester's graveyards.**

#### **Why is Dorchester Town Council testing memorials?**

In June 2004 the Chairman of the Health & Safety Commission wrote to all local authorities responsible for burials, advising them that: "The risk associated with unstable memorials is real and cannot be ignored". Since then Dorchester Town Council have been following diligently the industry guidance produced by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematoria Management. This guidance makes it clear that the testing of memorials is essential.

Nationally in the last ten years there have been over twenty major accidents, seven of which were fatal, six involving children and one an adult.

#### **Notice of testing**

Notices have been placed on notice boards and around the cemeteries about the testing taking place.

#### **How often are the memorials going to be tested?**

All memorials will be tested at least every five years with a few individual memorials being tested annually.

#### **Why are memorials failing?**

The majority of older memorials are constructed from a single piece of stone, whereas more modern memorials are constructed from several sections that are joined together. The main reason for memorials becoming unstable is the failure of these joints.

#### **Is Dorchester Town Council authorised to test my memorial?**

Dorchester Town Council has a duty of care, under the Health & Safety at Work Act, to ensure our venues and facilities are safe for visitors and staff.

#### **How is the testing carried out?**

Each memorial is carefully assessed by a visual and simple hand test to check for movement. A further test is carried out with an Industry Standard specialist piece of equipment known as a Memorial Safety Tester. This hand held device measures and

records if the memorial will accept the pressure of 35kg as recommended by the National Association of Memorial Masons and the Institute of Cemetery and Crematoria Management.

### **What happens if a memorial is found to be unsafe?**

If excessive movement of the memorial is detected, the grave number and area is noted and the burial register is checked for information regarding the registered owner of the grave. Every effort will be made to contact the owner and a letter will be sent informing them of the situation. The memorial will then be made safe by careful temporary support prior to repair by a stone mason.

### **Who is allowed to carry out remedial work?**

We are advising all deed holders who are affected by this, to contact us for advice on what is required to rectify the unstable memorial, or to contact their Funeral Director or Stone Mason.

### **The following Cemeteries have been tested and have headstones which have failed the stability tests:**

A list will be available once the testing has finished, this may take a few weeks.

### **Are you a deed holder or close relative of the deceased for any failed memorial?**

If so, please contact Dorchester Town Council for advice. If the memorial was installed recently, you may wish to check with the original installer whether the work is covered by existing guarantee. If it is not under guarantee and you do not want to make your own arrangements, Dorchester Town Council will make the memorial safe and will contact you again after the next yearly inspection of failed memorials.

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