

## Islington and Camden Cemetery Services

Islington and St. Pancras Cemetery and Crematorium Office  
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### Why are we testing memorials?

Over the past decade or so, memorial safety has become a high priority. There have been up to 6 people killed nationally caused by memorials collapsing, falling or being pulled over and crushing the person. The Health and Safety Executive therefore became involved and as a consequence, every cemetery throughout the British Isles needs to check their memorials.

We have decided to test all our memorials and to take action to secure any that are unsafe. This health and safety issue is for the benefit of grave owners, visitors and cemeteries staff.

Due to the huge number of memorials within Hampstead, St Pancras and Islington Cemeteries, a risk assessment was carried out by our staff. This highlighted the areas of greatest use by the public and therefore these areas will be assessed first.

The registered "Grave Owner" purchases the **Right of burial** in a grave and the **Right to erect a memorial** on it. The memorial belongs to that person and it is their responsibility to keep the memorial in a good and safe condition.

Due to the fact that the cemetery belongs to the burial authority, in the event of an accident, it will often result in the cemetery initially being held responsible pending, locating and advising the Registered Grave Owner. Sometimes the Registered Owner may be deceased or have moved address without informing us.

The cemetery must therefore inspect, test and in many respects, more importantly, record the condition of each memorial. Please be assured that this non-intrusive test does not involve digging up the grave.

The test can involve three different methods or more usually a mixture of all three:

1. visual inspection,
2. simple hand test or,
3. using a calibrated pressure test to 35kg which is the current national recognised standard.

The memorial safety records must be kept up to date, showing the date and result of each test and what action was taken. A record that we contacted the Registered Grave Owner, and a record of all those grave owners whose letters are returned "not known/no longer at this address" must also be kept. The records must be kept in such a way to be easily accessed by the Cemetery Management and if required, the Health and Safety Executive.

### How your memorial is made safe

A new method of fixing memorials to the concrete foundation has now been adopted, giving greater stability over the long term. See *Memorial Stone V1 Nov 2006 leaflet*.

Previously a layer of cement was used to attach the memorial to the concrete base (bearer). Moisture can creep in, expand the joint and thus make the memorial lose and unstable. The new method of making safe involves the stonemason drilling two holes in the memorial and bearer, and then placing two dowels into the holes, securing the memorial to the concrete foundation.



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