

Sibford Burial Ground

REGULATIONS

Adopted: **DRAFT June 2026**

1. Background

When the **Sibford Burial Ground** was created in 2011 anticipating the closure of the Holy Trinity Churchyard, the eligibility criteria were extended to enable both church parishioners and other residents of Sibford Gower, Burdrop and Sibford Ferris to **exercise their Common Law right to a burial in the parish in which they reside**.

The Sibford Burial Ground is therefore non-consecrated and non-denominational, but each grave plot may be blessed individually if a minister of religion conducts the burial service.

The Sibford Burial Ground is owned and managed by Sibford Gower Parish Council, with maintenance costs shared equally between Sibford Gower Parish Council and Sibford Ferris Parish Council.

The Regulations set out below are specific to the Sibfords Burial Ground, but it is the Council's policy that they are consistent where possible with the current [Churchyard Regulations of the Diocese of Oxford](#) which apply to the adjacent Holy Trinity Churchyard. In case of any ambiguity, our specific Regulations for the Sibford Burial Ground take precedence.

2. Eligibility

The eligibility for a burial or interment of cremated remains in the Sibford Burial Ground **applies only to a deceased person:**

- whose **permanent residential address was within the official Parish boundary** of either Sibford Gower & Burdrop or Sibford Ferris at the date of their death, or
- who **died within the official Parish** boundary of either Sibford Gower & Burdrop or Sibford Ferris, or
- who was **included on the electoral roll of the Holy Trinity Church**, Sibford and had been included for at least 5 years, at the date of their death.

At the sole discretion of the Council, this eligibility **may** be extended to include a deceased person whose **last residential address** was within the Sibfords parish boundaries and **had no other permanent residence:**

- due to temporarily residing away from the family home for education, training or employment purposes
- due to moving in with family or into other non-independent living arrangements
- due to moving into assisted living accommodation or other long term residential or nursing care
- due to being admitted to a hospital, a hospice or other end of life care.

Application for a new burial or cremated remains plot can only be made after the date of death, as **advanced reservation of grave plots is not permitted** in the Sibford Burial Ground.

However, if a double depth plot was approved at the time of application for a first deceased, the right to a second burial or cremated remains interment in an existing fee-paid plot will be reserved for the original approved rights holder.

A **cremated remains plot** can only be used for the interment of the cremated remains of one or two deceased persons.

A **burial plot** can only be used for the burial of one or two deceased persons, or for the burial of one person and the interment of the cremated remains of one person – it cannot be used for the interment of the cremated remains of two persons.

The rights to a burial or cremated remains plot in the Sibford Burial Ground will be subject to payment in full of all due fees, and to the ongoing compliance with the whole of these Regulations, and will expire 50 years after the date of burial or interment of the first deceased.

3. Fees

It is the Council's policy that our scale of fees for the Sibford Burial Ground remain consistent with the Table of Parochial Fees for the Diocese of Oxford, which are revised annually on 1st January.

The following table summarises our current scale of fees:

Fees payable to Sibford Gower Parish Council	Burial plot	Cremated Remains plot	Payment due
Burial or interment of 1st Deceased	£425	£206	Date of burial or interment of 1 st Deceased
Introduction of a new Monument or Ledger Stone	£179	£96	Date of burial or interment of 1 st Deceased
Burial or interment of 2nd Deceased	£425	£206	Date of burial or interment of 2 nd Deceased
Additional inscription on or modification to an existing Monument or Ledger Stone	£39	£39	Date of burial or interment of 2 nd Deceased

The Council reserves the right to charge additional fees at their sole discretion for services not covered by the above fee table.

Non-payment of due fees in full will result in termination of all current and future rights in the Sibford Burial Ground.

4. Memorial/Headstone Rules and Guidance

4.1 Application for permit to place Memorial/Headstone upon a grave

4.1.1 No Memorial/Headstone is to be installed unless a permit has been granted for the same by Sibford Gower Parish Council

4.1.2 An application for a permit to carry out Memorial/Headstone works may be made by any of the following in respect of a grave which is subject to a Right of Burial :-

- (i) the owner of the Right of Burial; or
- (ii) any person who can satisfy Sibford Gower Parish Council that he or she is a relative of the person buried in the grave, or is acting at the request of such a relative and that it is impractical for him or her or such relative to trace the owner of the said right.

This ensures the correct person is applying for the Memorial/Headstone works.

4.1.2 The permit application form must be completed fully and include a detailed plan of the proposed Memorial/Headstone including the dimensions of the same, and details of the proposed fixing method. This ensures our staff can ensure the proposed memorial is within the regulations and will be fixed to an approved industry standard.

4.2 Fixing of Memorials/Headstones

4.2.1 No works are permitted to be carried out on any grave space except by a Monumental Mason who is accredited to the British Registration of Approved Monumental Masons Scheme ("BRAMM") or an equivalent scheme

Basic cleaning/washing down and non specialist cleaning of a Memorial/Headstone may be undertaken by any person.

To promote high standards and protect consumers we only allow those registered to the approved national scheme to undertake any works on memorials/headstones in our Burial Ground. Approved masons have the necessary skills to ensure that any memorial/headstone they fix or repair will be able to pass a future stability test.

4.2.2 All Memorials/Headstones (including Memorials being re-fixed after a burial has taken place and those found to be unsafe after Memorial/Headstone testing has taken place) are to be fixed in line with BS8415 : 2018 the nationally recognised standard for fixing memorials/headstones. This states the minimum requirements for the fixing of Memorials/Headstones. On occasion it may be appropriate to include additional foundations or bearer slabs and these cannot exceed 4' in width x 18" deep.

All costs for this work must be met by the person to whom a permit to place the Memorial/Headstone was given on his or her heir.

To ensure all Memorials/Headstones are safe they must be fixed to the recognised approved standards of the day.

4.2.3 The upkeep and maintenance of any Memorial/Headstone within the Cemetery remains the responsibility of the person to whom a permit to place the Memorial/Headstone was given.

All Memorials/Headstones remain in the ownership and are the responsibility of the grave owner or person taking over responsibility after the grave owner is deceased.

4.3 Stability Guarantee Period

4.3.1 All Memorials/Headstones installed in the Sibfords Burial Ground from the date of installation must be subject to a 'Guarantee of Conformity' granted by the mason who installed the Memorial/Headstone. Such a guarantee is given to confirm that the Memorial/Headstone has been fixed to the best standard set by NAMM at the date of fixing and should last for a minimum of 30 years. If at any point during the life of the Memorial/Headstone it becomes loose or unstable and this cannot be attributed to ground conditions or disturbance, the mason should, under the terms of the said guarantee, refix the Memorial/Headstone to the original standard at no cost to the grave owner or the Council.

This is a standard guarantee that must be given to any person arranging a Memorial/Headstone in any site.

4.4 Memorial/Headstone Safety Testing

4.4.1 Any memorial/headstone purchased and erected on a grave space is owned by the registered grave owner and it is that person or persons who are ultimately responsible for its upkeep and maintenance.

Historically there have been a number of accidents in cemeteries around the UK, some of which have resulted in fatalities, due to memorials/headstones being unsafe. Whilst the memorials/headstone are the responsibility of the registered grave owner, Sibford Gower Parish Council have a responsibility for ensuring that its site is safe for both staff to work in and for the public to visit.

4.4.2 Memorial/Headstone Fixing

All memorials/headstones over 24.5 inches (625 mm) in height must be fixed to, and fully compliant, with the current British Standard (BS8415). This also extends to ANY memorial over 24.5" (625 mm) that is being re- fixed following an interment or removal for any other reason.

4.4.3 The key requirements are that memorials/headstones must be fixed to an approved and suitable foundation (where one is not provided by the Authority) and must be further secured using an approved locking or anchoring system.

4.4.4 Note that any refixing or repair works to memorials/headstones must be completed by a BRAMM (or other equivalent scheme) registered memorial mason. Temporary works to make memorials/headstones, and remove the risk of danger, will be undertaken by trained Sibford Gower Parish Council staff, volunteers, or a suitable appointed contractor.

4.4.5 Memorial/Headstone Inspections

All memorials/headstones over 24" in height will be inspected by trained staff at least once during a rolling 5 year period to assess their safety. This will be done through both a visual assessment and a basic hand test to determine if there is movement in the memorial/headstone and to what extent.

The individual undertaking the assessment will make the decision on the memorial's/headstone's overall safety based on a dynamic risk assessment for which they have been trained.

4.4.6 Once inspected each memorial/headstone will fall into one of three categories, detailed as follows:

- o Red - Category 1 – Memorial/headstone is unsafe and poses a significant risk and will require immediate attention to make safe and/or protect from the public.
- o Amber - Category 2 – Memorial/headstone is safe but there are minor concerns and it should be reassessed in 12 months' time to ensure it has not deteriorated further.
- o Green - Category 3 – Memorial/headstone is safe and should be re-inspected in 5 years as part of the next round of inspections or as part of any other check that may occur, for example when checking memorials/headstones around a planned burial ahead of excavation of the grave.

The Council has a legal obligation to ensure its site is safe to both visit and work in. In order to be satisfied that this is the case it is essential that Sibford Gower Parish Council carry out regular inspections of Memorials/Headstones on the site in a bid to avoid injury or death to any of its staff or visitors.

4.4.7 Staff undertaking the inspections will record the details of every memorial/headstone and an assessment of its safety using the categories above. The details recorded will include:

- Date of Inspection
- Name of Inspector
- Grave Identification
- Category of Memorial/Headstone (Red, Amber, Green)
- Details of any Actions Taken

4.4.8 Actions Post Inspection

Should a Memorial/Headstone be identified as a Category 1 (Red) and fail the inspection, staff will need to take immediate action to make that memorial/headstone temporarily safe or cordon it off until permanent repairs can be made by the grave owner. These actions will be based on a number of factors and the best solution will be administered by the Parish Clerk based on the assessment of the memorial/headstone and the surrounding area. These actions may include:

- Laying the memorial/headstone flat - A warning sign will be placed near to the memorial/headstone.
- Staked and Banded – The memorial/headstone will be fastened tight to a wooden post which will act as a temporary support. The banding will also hold a warning notice. The stake and band will be re- inspected every 12 months to ensure neither have deteriorated.
- Monolith Conversion – This involves digging out a depth roughly one third of the overall height of the memorial/headstone from the last joint in order that it can be sunk in to the ground and made safe. The memorial/headstone will have a suitable material wrapped around the part under the ground and a memorial/headstone warning notice will be added to the grave. Due to foundations it may be necessary for the memorial/headstone to be moved slightly forward into the grave space to avoid existing foundations.
- Cordoned Off – In some cases it may be necessary to cordon off a particular memorial/headstone or an area containing a number of memorials/headstones due to their

safety. Warning signs will be attached to any cordon placed around a memorial/headstone or group of memorials/headstones.

- Removal – In extreme cases it may be necessary to remove a memorial/headstone from the grave and placed somewhere securely within the curtilage of the Churchyard/Burial Ground if none of the above options are suitable.

All of the above are regarded as 'Temporary Fixes' and should not be seen as a permanent solution to deal with an unsafe memorial/headstone and are intended to reduce or remove the risk of a memorial/headstone causing harm or damage to someone. Prior to taking any of the actions above the memorial/headstone will be photographed and details recorded of any existing damage or issues.

4.4.9 Very large memorials/headstones, those over 8' (2.5M) will be visually assessed and if any concerns are recorded the memorial will be cordoned off and arrangements will be made for a specialist contractor to undertake an inspection and provide a detailed report including costs and options to make safe.

4.4.10 Informing Grave Owners

Sibford Gower Parish Council will endeavour to contact the grave owner where any action has been taken due to a memorial/headstone failing a safety inspection. For any memorials over 50 years of age no correspondence will be sent but a notice will be left on the grave space for a period of not less than 12 months.

Sibford Gower Parish Council will make every effort to contact grave owners, however if the grave owner is deceased or the last burial was over 50 years ago in our experience it is unlikely that any response will be received therefore no correspondence will be sent.

4.4.11 In the event of any memorial/headstone failing an inspection that has been installed within the previous 6 years, we will contact the memorial mason directly to request repairs be made to ensure the memorial/hadstone is fully compliant with BS8415.

The stability guarantee of a memorial is the responsibility of the memorial mason and they may provide a longer guarantee period, 6 years is the standard legal period that must be covered by the installation.

4.4.12 Grave Owners Responsibilities

The registered grave owner has a responsibility to ensure the memorial/headstone is made safe through being properly re-fixed to the current BS8415 standard and works must be undertaken by a qualified and BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) registered Memorial Mason (or equivalent).

Do it yourself repairs by families will not be permitted. Memorials/headstones must be fixed to the current best standard of the day by a licensed memorial/headstone fixer. All costs associated with organising a memorial/headstone to be repaired, including the reversal of any works undertaken by Sibford Gower Parish Council, remain the responsibility of the grave owner.

4.4.13 Should grave owners fail to take any action within a reasonable time period then Sibford Gower Parish Council will look to apply a semi- permanent solution to the memorial/headstone, this will involve either laying the memorial/headstone flat or sinking the memorial/headstone into the ground (monolith conversion) or other suitable action.

Sibford Gower Parish Council needs to maintain its site to a high standard and will always try to avoid taking any action that may impact on the general grounds maintenance of the site.

4.4.14 Grave owners are strongly advised to organise and take out their own Insurance cover against any accidental damage that may occur to the memorial/headstone. The Council cannot be held liable for any damage to a memorial/headstone that is caused by any factors outside of our control such as damage due to storms that may cause falling debris and recommend that any insurance covers damage of this type. Your own insurance company may be able to assist, alternatively discuss options with your chosen memorial mason.

5. Memorial/Headstone Specifications

5.1 Monuments

A monument is the name given to a headstone, or vertical memorial stone, placed to mark a burial or cremation plot in the Sibfords Burial Ground, and must comply with the following:

- A monument may be introduced only at the place where the body of the person to be commemorated by the monument is buried.
- Six months must have elapsed since the date of burial before a monument may be introduced.
- The maximum permitted height for a monument is 915mm (36") and the maximum permitted width is 760mm (30").
- The maximum permitted thickness for a monument is 100mm (4") and the minimum permitted thickness is 75mm (3") (except for slate monuments, for which the minimum permitted thickness is 40mm (1.5")).
- Unless the monument is to be supported by a pre-cast concrete shoe situated below the ground, the Council must be satisfied that the monument will be inserted sufficiently deeply into the ground to ensure its stability, having regard to the nature of the ground and any likely settlement.
- A monument may have a visible stone or concrete base only if:
 - the base is an integral part of the design of the monument,
 - it does not project from the monument by more than 50mm (2") away from the place of burial and 205mm (8") towards the place of burial, and
 - the monument is connected to the base by non-ferrous dowels.
- The base may make provision for not more than two vases that are to be fitted into it.
- Any foundation slab for a monument must not be visible after the work of introducing the monument has been completed.
- A monument can only be made and introduced into the Sibford Burial Ground by a qualified monumental stonemason, and must meet the requirements for Design, Materials, and Inscriptions set out in Sections 5.3 to 5.5 of these Regulations.

5.2 Ledger Stones

A Ledger Stone is the name given to a horizontal memorial stone placed to mark a cremated remains or ashes plot in the Sibfords Burial Ground, and must comply with the following:

- A ledger stone may be introduced only at the place where the cremated remains of the person to be commemorated by the ledger stone are interred.
- The maximum permitted dimensions for a ledger stone are 460mm (18") in length and 460mm (18") in width.
- A ledger stone must be laid so that its upper surface is flush with the ground.
- A ledger stone can only be made and introduced into the Sibford Burial Ground by a qualified monumental stonemason, and must meet the requirements for Design, Materials, and Inscriptions set out in Sections 5.3 to 5.5 of these Regulations.

5.3 Design

The design of all Monuments and Ledger Stones in the Sibfords Burial Ground must comply with the following:

- A ledger stone must be rectangular or square (but a monument need not be).
- A monument or ledger stone must not take the form of a statue or of a particular object such as a heart, a person, animal or other figure; but a monument (though not a ledger stone) may take the form of a representation of a book.
- A monument or ledger stone must not include any lighting, whether electric or otherwise or any glass shades.
- A monument or ledger stone must not include:
 - A portrait, photograph or other image of an individual (whether of the person commemorated or any other person)
 - any other pictures or imagery except as permitted for an etching as described below
 - any moulding
 - any video or sound recording
 - a QR code or other machine-readable label
 - plinths, kerbs or other fencing, railings or other demarcation
 - stone or glass chippings.
- A black, white or uncoloured etching or carving may be permitted provided that it:
 - is reverent and respectful to common religious beliefs
 - does not depict an individual, and
 - covers no more than one-fifth of the surface of the monument or ledger stone.

- A monument may be inscribed with a stonemason's mark provided that the mark is not in a prominent position.

5.4 Materials

The materials of all Monuments and Ledger Stones in the Sibfords Burial Ground must comply with the following:

- A monument or ledger stone must be made of natural stone or of hardwood.
- The surface of the stone must not be made reflective by being polished or finely honed.
- A monument or ledger stone is not permitted if it:
 - is black, blue, red or green (or appears to be any of those colours) or is otherwise brightly coloured,
 - is made of marble, synthetic stone or plastic, or
 - is painted.

5.5 Inscriptions

The inscriptions on all Monuments and Ledger Stones in the Sibfords Burial Ground must comply with the following:

- A monument or ledger stone may include an inscription provided it is simple, reverent and respectful to common religious beliefs
- In addition to the formal names of the person commemorated, nicknames or other names by which the person was familiarly known may be included as part of the person's name, within brackets or inverted commas.
- An inscription must be incised or in relief and may be uncoloured, grey or black only; plastic, lead or other inserted lettering is not permitted.
- Hand-crafted letter cutting is permitted.
- Cursive script (that is, a script which gives the appearance of having been written in a running hand) is not permitted.
- The addition of further inscriptions which comply with the whole of these Regulations and which are consistent with the style and language of the original inscription may be authorised following further burial in a grave or interment of further cremated remains.
- An application for authority to add a further inscription must be made to the Council in writing and provide details of the proposed additional inscription (including the style of lettering to be used and the place on the monument or ledger stone where it is proposed to be added).

6. General

The following regulations must be observed to maintain and preserve the general appearance of the Sibford Burial Ground for the benefit of all visitors:

- Individual gardens, including the planting of trees or shrubs are not permitted; but the Council may authorise the planting of a small number of bulbs.
- Plastic flowers and plastic wreaths are not permitted; except that wreaths and other arrangements of artificial poppies may be introduced to commemorate those who have died in the service of their country in time of war or other conflict.
- Cut flowers and silk flowers may be left at the place of burial or interment of cremated remains but must be removed once they are decaying or have become faded.
- With the permission of the Council, up to 3 toys or similar objects may be left at the place of burial or interment of cremated remains for a period of 12 months from the date of burial or interment but must be removed at the end of that period.
- Items should be placed on burial plots in such a way that they do not prevent maintenance of the burial ground such as mowing and strimming
- Should any items placed on burial plots prevent maintenance by the Council, the Council reserves the right to remove the items.
- The Council, or a person acting on their behalf, may remove any objects which are not, or have ceased to be, authorised under these regulations and which have not been authorised by the Council.
- The Council reserves the right of unobstructed access to the whole of the Sibford Burial Ground, including the right of passage over all graves for any purpose including maintenance and repair, and to enable burials and interments in any space adjacent to existing burial plots and cremated remains plots.