

Cemetery Management: Feedback from Grounds Maintenance Staff

Rossendale Borough Council's four municipal cemeteries include Haslingden, Rawtenstall, Bacup and Whitworth. Feedback has been sought from Grounds Maintenance staff, in particular the Cemetery Chargehands, working in our cemeteries. Find below comments relating to issues of problematic memorials and other issues within the cemeteries.

1. Foundation stones are becoming larger, this is causing problems removing the memorials to dig graves or for space for the spoil boxes.
2. Unauthorised fences and garden kerbs around graves make maintaining the cemetery difficult.
3. Glass jars, solar lights, lanterns and soft toys are commonplace on graves and can also cause problems maintaining the cemetery.
4. Unauthorised wooden crosses and stainless steel monuments are commonly placed on graves by families.
5. Haslingden Cemetery (in particular the H2 plot) is the worst for unauthorised memorials, fences and grave plantings.
6. Because the regulations have not been properly enforced for a number of years, other people think it is acceptable for unauthorised monuments, fences and kerbs and follow suit. With so many unauthorised monuments it will now be increasingly difficult to enforce these regulations in this sensitive area without reprisals.
7. Some Monumental Masons are not lining up headstones properly and as a result monuments are encroaching onto the burial plot or not centred on the grave.
8. Staff are concerned with the safety of shoring graves using our current wooden shoring. There is far better hydraulic shoring on the market although this usually requires a longer dug space.
9. Staff request a smaller JCB digger than what we have currently, this will cause less damage to the turf and be better for accessibility to reopen graves.
10. Staff feel Monumental Masons should be removing the monuments for reopen graves. There are health and safety concerns with our staff moving large monuments and also concerns if these monuments are damaged in the process or if they are deemed to be not replaced correctly.