# Cemetery Opening Hours

## Bideford / Torrington

**Bideford** - Monday to Saturday :- 10am to 7pm (April 1st to Sept 30th) Monday to Saturday :- 10am to 5pm (Oct 1st to March 31st)

Sundays, Christmas Day & Good Friday 10am to 5pm (all year)

Sunday:- 10am to 5pm (all year)

## Northam / Holsworthy

All day throughout the year

# Local Authority Cemeteries Order 1977, Section 18/19

## Offences - no person shall:

Wilfully create any disturbance in a Cemetery,

Commit any nuisance in a Cemetery,

Wilfully interfere with any burial taking place in a Cemetery,

Wilfully interfere with any grave or vault, any tombstone or other memorial, or any flowers or plants or any such matter,

Play at any game or sport in a Cemetery.

Any offences under Section 18 shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £1000 and, in the case of a continuing offence, to a fine not exceeding £10 for each day during which the offence continues after conviction therefore.

Vehicle access, except for attendance at an interment, is restricted to those specifically authorised by the Council.

Vehicle speed is restricted to 5mph.

Bicycles / skate boards or similar may not be ridden in the cemetery.

Children under 12 years must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Dogs must be kept on a lead and should not be allowed to foul the Cemetery grounds. Please note that **NO** dogs are permitted within the grounds of Bideford or Torrington Cemeteries.

We consistently receive complaints about dog faeces on graves. Some people also get very heated about dogs generally and demand that they be banned from cemeteries. Similar numbers of dog lovers oppose a ban and state that they will take their dog to the graveside whatever, as very often the dog was owned by the deceased person. Where permitted when attending a grave, dogs on a leash are allowed but faeces must be removed and placed in bins.

Cemeteries are also included in The Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996. Under this Act we can prosecute owners who fail to clean up after their dogs. In addition, the Council employ dog wardens to help us enforce the Act.

No person shall bring any litter or other waste material into a Cemetery and any waste or litter arising from attending or caring for graves shall be deposited in the receptacles provided.

All persons shall conduct themselves in a quiet, decent and orderly manner within the Cemetery.

No person shall unreasonably interrupt the Cemetery Staff whilst they are engaged in their duties nor seek to employ them privately to execute any work within a cemetery.  No person employed by the Council is allowed to receive any gratuity whatsoever.

No person shall canvass or solicit orders in the cemetery grounds.

Alcoholic drinks shall not be consumed in the cemetery.

# Interments

## Interment Hours

**Summer - April to October:** Monday to Friday: 10am to 4pm (3.30pm on Fridays)

Saturday: 10am to 12noon (additional fee payable)

**Winter - November to March:** Monday to Friday: 10am to 3pm (2:30pm on Fridays)   
Saturday: 10am to 12noon (additional fee payable)

No interments shall take place on Good Friday, Christmas Day or Public Holidays except in cases of emergency certified by the Coroner or registered Medical Practitioner.

All interments must be pre-booked.

## Booking Interment

Bookings for interments should be made initially by telephone to the Cemeteries Service on 01237 424244 (to check availability of cemetery and grave space) and subsequently by completing the Notice of Interment Form with payment to Torridge District Council, Riverbank House, Bideford EX39 2QG - (01237 428700) or alternatively via our website [www.torridge.gov.uk](http://www.torridge.gov.uk) (Online cemetery application forms) Completed form to be submitted not less than three (3) working days (exclusive of Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays) before the date of interment. Payment must be submitted prior to day of actual interment.

## Certificate for Disposal

The Registrars Certificate for Disposal, the Coroners Order for Burial or the Certificate of Cremation must be given to the Cemetery Officer or designated person before an interment can take place.

## Purchased Graves

Purchased graves are those graves for which the ‘Exclusive Right of Burial’ has been purchased, this gives the purchaser the right to authorise the use of the grave for further interments and to apply for a memorial to be erected. The ‘purchase’ refers to the right of burial and not the actual purchase of the land itself.

The ‘Exclusive Right of Burial’ can be also used as a method to pre-book a grave space or ashes plot for future family use. NB.This procedure is not available for the Northam or Torrington cemeteries due to the limited number of spaces remaining.

Exclusive Rights of Burial are currently granted for 25 years from the date of purchase. At the end of this time you may extend the Right for a further 25 years up to a maximum of 100 years. After the rights have lapsed, grave ownership reverts to Torridge District Council and we may reuse or resell any space remaining.

Exclusive Rights of Burial will need to be purchased for all interments where the grave is excavated for more than one person or where a memorial is to be erected. This will also include the burial of ashes where an inscribed tablet is provided.

Please keep the deed safe as it is your ownership of the ‘right of burial’.

On the death of the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial, the rights to the grave may be authorised by the next of kin or an executor.

The owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial may transfer the right to another person by submitting a Transfer Application Form, obtainable from Torridge District Council, Riverbank House, Bideford, EX39 2QG and by payment of a transfer fee.

Memorials may only be placed on a grave space for which the Exclusive Right of Burial has been purchased.

No grave for which an exclusive right of burial has been purchased may be opened for the interment of a body or cremated remains or the scattering of cremated remains without the written permission of the owner of the Exclusive Right or their successor in title.

The owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial is responsible for informing the Council of any change of address. If a problem occurs with the grave or memorial and we cannot contact you, we have the right to take whatever action is necessary to put the problem right. If this involves a cost to the Council, we may ask you to repay any reasonable costs incurred.

## Unpurchased graves

An unpurchased grave, also known as a public or common grave. An unpurchased single grave represents the least expensive burial option; all you pay is the interment fee. The grave itself remains the property of Torridge District Council and we may use it to bury other people who want an unpurchased grave. You may not place any memorial upon the grave and should not expect to be able to bury another relative in the same grave.

These graves can be bought within three years of the last burial, i.e. ‘Exclusive Right of Burial’ purchased. Where the grave is not purchased the council will decide who will be buried and this may not necessarily be a member of the same family.

No memorial rights exist on public graves, therefore no headstones or other memorials can be erected, unless the ‘Exclusive Right of Burial’ is purchased.

## Grave Spaces

Standard grave space 2.8m (9' 2”) x 1.3m (4' 3”)

Half grave spaces available for a child

Full grave spaces are available for up to:

* + - 1. 3 interments in Bideford Cemetery
      2. 2 interments in Torrington & Northam Cemetery
      3. 1 interment in Holsworthy Cemetery

This restriction is due to the ground conditions at the various locations.

Graves can only be used for interments determined by the depth that the grave was originally excavated:

Single: 1 interment - depth 1.5m

Double: 2 interments - depth 1.8m

Treble: 3 interments - depth 2.5m

No further full burials will be permitted if the maximum number of interments have been made. Interment of ashes will be permitted after the final full burial, if required.

No body shall be buried in a grave in such a manner that any part of the coffin is less than 0.9m (3’) below the level of any ground adjoining the grave.

## Grave Excavation

The council reserves the right to place soil boxes on graves next to those which are being opened, without notice. The soil box will be removed immediately after the interment and the grave will be left as it was previously.

Following excavation of the grave the Grounds Maintenance Contractor will provide grass matting and peg same to grave sides and perimeter, also to spoil heaps, boards etc. He will be on standby to provide assistance during the service.

Immediately the cortege has left the cemetery, back filling will begin. The grave will be finished by slightly mounding the excavated material and covering with previously cut turf.

Floral tributes shall be collected and placed in position on the grave, with the site being left in a clean and tidy condition.

## Cremated Remains (Ashes)

Cremated Remains graves are available at all cemeteries in separate locations to the main burial area, apart from Northam.  They normally have a capacity for two sets of remains. The ‘Exclusive Right of Burial’ must be purchased as for a full grave before a second interment can take place or any memorial erected.  Cremated remains may also be interred within an existing family grave, although this may hinder the later interment of a coffined burial.

New full grave spaces cannot be purchased for the interment of single cremated remains.

## Coffins

Only wood, wicker and cardboard coffins or caskets and shrouds, and biodegradable urns will be accepted for burial, unless agreed with the Cemetery Officer.

## Funerals

The conduct of all funerals within the cemetery is subject to the control of the Council's designated officer.

Music may only be played in the cemetery grounds with prior permission.

Immediately after the interment the grave will be backfilled with excavated material, mounded and covered with previously cut turf, any floral tributes will be placed on the grave by grounds maintenance staff.

There are Chapel’s of Rest within the Bideford & Torrington cemeteries.

## Flowers and Wreaths

Floral tributes will be removed by cemetery staff four weeks after the funeral or earlier if they become unsightly, or at the request of relatives or an executor.

Christmas wreaths will be removed by cemetery staff during the last week of January. If you wish to remove them yourself, please do so by 6th January.

All other floral tributes should be maintained by those visiting graves.

All material suitable for composting e.g. floral, plant remains should be placed in the wire baskets provided within the cemetery.

The Cemetery Staff may remove, or cause to be removed, any glass jar and vase or any other object considered being a hazard to public safety or to cemetery workers, from any grave without notice.

## Memorials

An application for all proposed memorials and inscriptions must be submitted to Torridge District Council for approval and all appropriate fees paid prior to any works being undertaken on site. Although the intention is not to restrict choice, the Council as Burial Authority, reserves the right to object to an inscription that is, in their opinion, improper or undesirable. Any question that shall arise touching the fitness of any inscription in any part of the consecrated portion of the cemeteries may be determined on appeal by the Bishop of the Diocese.

Memorials may only be placed on a grave space for which the Exclusive Right of Burial has been purchased.

Wooden crosses are permitted as temporary grave markers in lawn cemetery areas, prior to the installation of a permanent memorial.

Only one headstone / memorial per grave space is allowed. Except for additional low level tablets to commemorate the interment of ashes within a standard grave space. These are to be positioned immediately adjacent the main memorial at the head of the plot.

New memorials to be set in line with previously erected headstones to give a neat and tidy overall appearance.

New footstones, kerbstones or other forms of surround are not permitted within lawned areas.

All permanent memorials are to be constructed and installed by a competent stone mason registered by the Council, in accordance with the current National Association of Memorial Mason's Code of Practice (copy available on request), and to the satisfaction of the Supervising Officer. Any contractor working in the cemetery must hold public liability insurance cover to a minimum of £5,000,000 (5 million pounds).

No work is to take place in the cemetery before 8.30am and after 5.00pm or sunset (whichever is sooner). No work will take place on Saturdays, Sundays or any bank or public holidays, except by agreement with the Council. Monumental masons will be required to suspend work for the duration of a funeral.

Any damage done in connection with the erection of a memorial must be made good by the person erecting the memorial and the site left in a tidy condition.

No memorial may exceed 1.2m (4') in height and 0.76m (2' 6'') in width on single grave spaces or 1.8m (6') width on double grave spaces.

Memorials in the cremated remains section and children's burial areas may not exceed 0.6m (2’0”) in height or plan size 0.70m x 0.70m (2’ 3” x 2’ 3”). The normal style permitted is a flat square or hexagonal tablet which can accommodate a short inscription and inset flower container, or an open book type memorial. Other types will be considered, but please check with Authority first.

All upright memorials **must** be installed with stainless steel ground anchors which comply with the NAMM Code of Practice, except by agreement with the Council.

All new memorials must have the corresponding grave space number placed conspicuously on the left hand side of the base of the tablet or the reverse of the headstone.

No advertisement or trademark may appear on the memorial except for the name of the memorial mason who supplied it, this to be only on the reverse in lettering not more than 25mm (1”) high.

Pictures / photographs of the deceased may be added to the headstone, but should be no greater than 125mm x 75mm (5” x 3”)

Memorials are to be installed on a 0.92 x 0.46m (36" x 18") concrete flag, except by prior agreement with the Council.

The responsibility for the safety and upkeep, including repairs to any gravestone or memorial remains solely with the owner(s) of the grave or their successor(s) in title.

The Council will make regular checks of memorials. Any memorials found to be unstable will be temporarily covered with a ‘yellow warning sack’ or laid flat if dangerous. The Council reserves the right to remove unsafe memorials at its discretion if the owner or successor cannot be found or refuses to arrange repairs.

Shrubs, plants, bulbs and trees may not be planted without permission of the Council and then only in the immediate surrounds of the memorial space at the head of the grave. The Council reserves the right to prune or remove, without notice, any tree or plant which becomes a hazard or a nuisance, a charge will be made for this.

# Grounds Maintenance

## Mowing

Our lawn graves are designed to be neatly mown and most people choose them for this reason. We find it sometimes necessary to restrict mowing on lawn graves where glass, plastic items, windmills, pot plants, bedding plants and shrubs etc., have been placed over the grass area. In the interests of public safety, the Council would prefer that the above mentioned items are not placed on any new grave.

Where items are placed on the grass, they should be within close proximity of the headstone. Grounds Maintenance staff may in certain circumstances remove them for health and safety reasons, if not in this location.

Northam and Holsworthy Cemeteries are lawn cemeteries and hence no items are permitted on the grave, other than an agreed memorial.

## Access to Graves

Please note that in the future, perhaps a week or even years hence, we will need to excavate the grave at the side or foot of the grave you have purchased. We may have to place boards over the grave and perhaps a spoil box and this may prevent you visiting the grave for a short period. Please be prepared for this, and rest assured that we only do this if we cannot place the soil or boards elsewhere. After the funeral, we clean the grave and leave the area neat and tidy. Indeed, when a burial next occurs in the grave you own, we will be covering the adjacent graves and causing a similar problem for other grave owners.

The grave will be monitored and may well sink due to the soil settling / compacting, this is quite normal and it will be replaced at various times and after about six months the grave will be levelled and either turf laid or grass seeded. All this work will be carried out as carefully as possible.

In both these circumstances any flowers / plants on the grave may be damaged as a result of these works and therefore should not be planted until full reinstatement has been completed.

## Personal Artefacts

Some plastic flowers remain within our cemeteries for long periods. After long exposure to the elements they look unkempt, often become neglected and also pose serious problems if they are caught inside the cutters of mowing machines. Please avoid plastics wherever possible. Where plastic items are placed on graves, we may remove them in order to protect grounds maintenance staff.

Plastic windmills are now appearing on graves. These often make un-necessary noise, which may disturb the quiet dignity of funeral services. They also break into dangerous fragments if touched by nylon strimmer cable and often after strong winds are blown onto adjacent graves. Please refrain from using these items.

Candles / Night Lights although presenting little risk, have been shown to draw unwanted attention to the grave and possible vandalism or theft may result. Their use should be kept to a short period after the burial and subsequently removed.

The practise of placing cuddly toys / teddy bears should also be avoided.

## Theft

Expensive fresh flowers and silk flower arrangements are occasionally stolen and / or removed and placed on other graves. We constantly monitor the situation and routinely talk to police about any problems. Please let us know if you experience theft.

## Vandalism

Vandalism is rare, but when it occurs, it can be very distressing. The Council are not responsible for vandalism damage. If you fear vandalism to your grave or memorial, your stone mason may be able to offer you insurance.

## Stone Chippings

Please do not place stone chippings around graves. They have proved to be dangerous in the past for grounds maintenance staff using mowing equipment. Small stones can get caught and fly from the blades or 'strimmer line', thereby endangering personal safety.

## Winter Conditions

Every year, glass or china vases on graves freeze and split and the shards become a safety hazard. Please do not use glass on graves. Also note that if vase holes in stone do not drain properly and hold water, they will freeze and this can split any type of memorial.

In winter, we do not treat frozen surfaces near graves. Only roads and paths used for access to imminent funerals are salted and / or gritted, and the majority of paths, roads and parking places can be covered with ice and / or snow.

As anniversaries occur every day of the year, and the bereaved feel an over-whelming need to visit the grave, we never close our sites even though ice and snow exist. Please exercise extreme care throughout winter and avoid visits when ground conditions may result in a fall or some form of injury.

## Reclamation

The Council as Burial Authority reserve all rights of management of the Cemetery. In particular with respect to unused capacity: in unpurchased graves this is liable to be used at any time; in a case where a grant of Exclusive Rights of Burial has been made but not exercised after a period of not less than 75 years; or if exercised, after a period of not less than 100 years.

## Rights

The Council reserve the right to amend any of the foregoing regulations and to deal with any circumstances or contingency not provided for in the regulations as necessary.