



Fact Sheet

Burial Grounds

Burial grounds are important places for people, offering a space for remembrance, reflection and connection. Their peaceful and often undisturbed nature also provides valuable habitats where wildlife can thrive.

We manage burial grounds as important spaces for both people and nature, using tailored approaches to balance the type of site with the needs of the local community.

On behalf of Cornwall Council, we care for around 130 burial sites across Cornwall. These sites include three distinct types of burial grounds: open cemeteries, closed cemeteries, and closed churchyards.

Open cemeteries

These sites are actively used and fully managed for people to support regular visits.

Grass is typically cut every four weeks between March and October, maintaining a respectful environment for visitors. Paths, entrances, and key areas are kept clear. Memorials and boundaries are also monitored and inspected for safety.

Wildflower areas in burial grounds will be left to flower and set seed, supporting species such as English Bluebells, which have recently made a strong resurgence. We want to protect and encourage this success.

Closed cemeteries

Closed cemeteries are no longer used for new memorial plots and are managed with a focus on nature, while still allowing access for visitors to tend memorials.

Grass is usually cut around three times a year, allowing wildflowers and grasses to grow, creating habitats for insects, birds and other wildlife. At the same time, main paths and entrances are maintained more regularly.

This approach helps create quieter, more natural spaces for reflection.

Please note that open cemeteries often have older closed sections which are managed in accordance with the above.

Closed churchyards

A closed churchyard is one that has been formally closed for burials but remains part of the church site and may still be used for church purposes.

These are managed in a similar way to closed cemeteries, with an emphasis on supporting biodiversity alongside public access.

Delivered by

Encouraging wildlife

We aim to strike the right balance between meeting the needs of visitors and supporting biodiversity.

By managing grass cutting and natural areas carefully, we create spaces that support wildlife such as wildflowers, birds, and pollinators, while allowing access for remembrance and community use.

To achieve this, we work closely with church wardens, friends' groups and volunteers to ensure sites reflect local needs and priorities.

Please note that hedgerows are managed on a cyclical basis unless urgent safety work is needed. Tree works are identified and planned as part of our ongoing responsibilities.

Site management

Management plans for closed cemeteries and churchyards are developed with Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) and Cornwall Council. They consider the specific features of each site, such as safety considerations, wildlife habitats, historic monuments, volunteer activities and maintenance needs. This helps ensure each location is cared for in a way that protects its character, heritage and local importance while keeping it safe, attractive and well maintained.

Accessing memorials

If you need help accessing a memorial, we can arrange for a path to be cut.

Please email us with as much information as possible (such as name, site photos, plot number, or what3words reference). We will do our best to assist, particularly in areas where older memorials sit within established habitats.

Please email environment@cormacltd.co.uk

Grass cutting for events (closed churchyards only)

We will endeavour to accommodate event requirements by adjusting our scheduled grass cutting visits where possible. However, if additional cuts are required outside the normal maintenance programme to meet specific event needs, these may be subject to an additional charge.

After grass cutting (all burial grounds)

Grass clippings are left on the site and spread evenly so they can break down naturally and return nutrients to the soil.

We use a combination of mowers and strimmers to work around memorials and boundaries, and we sweep or blow grass off headstones after cutting.

Due to the large number of memorials (over 60,000), we are not able to clean them individually by hand.

While we always aim to leave areas clean and tidy, some clippings may remain or be blown back onto surfaces in wet or windy conditions. Any residue will not cause damage, and visitors are welcome to clean memorials if they wish.

Some wildlife meadow patches may be 'cut and collected' annually, with grass cuttings removed. This helps reduce soil fertility, increase species diversity in the grassland, encouraging more flowers and more wildlife.

Volunteering

We welcome anyone who is interested in getting involved in caring for burial grounds or supporting local environmental projects.

There are opportunities for both regular and occasional volunteers, with no experience needed. Activities include meadow management, such as scything and raking, in some of Cornwall's most beautiful and peaceful spaces.

Please email volunteers@cormacltd.co.uk

More information

You can find out more about how we maintain closed churchyards on Cornwall Council's website <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/parksand-open-spaces/closed-churchyards/>

Please note where closed churchyards are maintained by a town or parish council, the standards of maintenance are set locally and the grass cutting regimes may vary. You can get in touch by emailing us at environment@cormacltd.co.uk

If there is an immediate risk to public safety, please telephone 0300 1234 222 (24-hour service) giving details of the location.