

**Final Report of
Cemeteries Task Group**

Lancaster City Council

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1. Foreword

Cemeteries are a vital Council service, but it is clear from this report that the Council has not given them a high enough priority in recent years, resulting in under-resourcing and a variety of problems affecting bereaved visitors to the cemeteries and people who live nearby.

I would like to thank the councillors and officers involved in the Cemeteries Task Group for their thorough research and recommendations on this issue over the past year. They have spent a lot of time visiting cemeteries both within the district and elsewhere, and considering evidence from 'witnesses' and various documents, to find out how we could do things better.

I hope that this work will result in a much improved service which is sustainable for many years to come.

**Cllr E Heath
Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2005/06**

2. Introduction

This report follows the Interim Report that was published in December 2005 and presented at Cabinet in January 2006. The first report was an interim report, rather than a final one, to allow consideration of the key financial recommendations emanating from the investigations of the Task Group, prior to budget setting.

This report reiterates the initial 8 recommendations made in the Interim Report and Cabinet's response to these recommendations, together with a number of additional recommendations made by the Task Group subsequent to the publication of the initial report.

**Cllr David Kerr
Chairman
Cemeteries Task Group**

3. Summary of Recommendations

To assist in formulating its recommendations, The Task Group has invited contributions from Funeral Directors, Stone Masons, Friends Groups, Council Officers and members of the public, whose views and concerns have been conveyed following press releases and attendance at Task Group meetings, to give evidence. Information obtained in these meetings was supplemented by site visits to the Council's cemeteries and to several beacon councils. Based on the evidence received by the Task Group, this report focuses on creating what the Task Group believe are acceptable standards for the Council's cemeteries.

The Interim Report submitted to Cabinet in January 2006 consisted of recommendations one to eight, and progress on these is detailed in section 4 of this report. Cabinet are additionally requested to consider recommendations nine to fourteen, as set out below.

Recommendation 9

- (a) That an assessment of the state of the paths in all of the cemeteries is undertaken together with quotations for repair work, and, if in places total replacement of sections of path is required, then this may be the subject of a growth bid (or possible capital expenditure) in 2007/08.
- (b) That consideration is given to the future usage of the 3 Grade II listed chapels within Lancaster Cemetery.

Recommendation 10

That in order to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour Cabinet should consider implementing the following measures:

- a) That the signage on the current litter bins within the Council's cemeteries be revised to indicate that it is acceptable to dispose of suitably wrapped dog waste within them.
- b) That the new signage (if forthcoming) should reflect the Council's zero tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour.
- c) That arrangements are considered for the securing of the Council's cemeteries over night to deter anti-social behaviour.
- d) That consideration is given to ensure measures are introduced to reduce the likelihood of further arson attacks to Torrisholme chapel.

Recommendation 11

That consideration is given to formally establishing a pilot Friend's Group, with a view to creating more if successful.

Recommendation 12

That the Task Group's first preference with regard to the future use of Torrisholme Lodge is that in the event of the Police confirming interest in the property consideration be given to removing the lodge from Council housing stock, as in the Blackpool example.

If this is unsuccessful, the Task Group would support that the Lodge should remain in Council housing stock, subject to a sensitive lettings policy and, if possible, not let to a family with young children. Boundaries and a garden area should be defined and where possible reasonable measures taken to ensure mitigation between the conflicts that could arise with regard to the use of the Lodge as housing and its location in a cemetery.

Recommendation 13

That the Cemeteries Task Group recommends that policies following best practice be adopted to improve the woodland burial areas; these include but are not limited to:

- a) Plant more trees, shrubs and bulbs, of a wider range of species, particularly those which encourage native wildlife, and those which would add to the visual attractiveness of the area. This is to be done in order to produce natural-looking woodland groves/burial areas, which are of sufficient size to attract use by the public. Development of a native meadowland should be prioritised at Hale Carr. A report to Overview and Scrutiny entitled 'Flower Beds and Urban Meadows' (June 2005) noted that in order to create areas richer in biodiversity wildflower landscaping was essential.
- b) Formulate plans for developing woodland and native burial areas with regard to tree spacing arrangements, grave location and markers.
- c) Develop a management plan with regard to mowing and planting.
- d) Set aside wildlife friendly areas e.g. 'hedgehog hotel' log-piles.
- e) Place signage explaining woodland/wildlife management aims and practice.
- f) Promote and encourage woodland burial by improved information and improved liaison with Funeral Directors and Friends Groups, if established; particularly with regard to allowing people a wide range of choice over such things as: type of coffin, eg. cardboard/willow, transport of the coffin, eg. not necessarily a hearse, design and ownership of the ceremony and participation in the burial.

Recommendation 14

- a) That Cabinet be advised that in the view of the Task Group it is not feasible or pragmatic to seek an alternative provider or provision of a cemetery service.
- b) That consideration be given to providing a private grave maintenance service when additional staff resources permit, and if there is a proven need.
- c) That the Council inform the Government that funding from Central Government is vital and must be forthcoming in order to improve cemetery standards.
- d) That the Cabinet visit Lancaster Cemetery to see for themselves the state of disrepair of the Grade II listed chapels, poor paths and limitations of current ground maintenance and gain an insight into the potential of this historic cemetery.

4. Update on Recommendations made in the Interim Report

The Interim Report consisted of eight recommendations to Cabinet. These initial recommendations are listed below together with Cabinet response and an update on any subsequent developments.

Recommendation 1

- a) That following the Monument Stability Report the Task Group recommends to Cabinet the appointment of an in-house dedicated supervisor and two staff as a matter of some urgency.
- b) That Cabinet implement a plan to deal with monument stability at other cemeteries and closed churchyards as a matter of urgency and public safety.
- c) That Cabinet considers what action to take in the medium to long-term for headstones which are currently staked and banded, where relatives have not come forward.

Cost Indication (Where known): £92,000

Cabinet Response

A separate report on the Cabinet agenda considered the options for dealing with headstones which have been made temporarily safe, for making safe larger memorials at Lancaster Cemetery and for continuing the headstone safety programme into the future. Health and Safety in Cemeteries is a statutory duty on the City Council and the highest priority area for attention.

Task Group Response

The Task Group are pleased that Cabinet consider this to be an area of high priority and have made funds available to address this.

Recommendation 2

That consideration be given to employing an additional member of staff in the Cemeteries Office.

Cost Indication (Where known): £19,782

Cabinet Response

Employing an additional member of staff in the Cemeteries Office will increase costs at a time when income is reducing and costs associated with headstone safety are increasing ... The work of the Task Group has highlighted the need for integrated management of the Cemeteries/Bereavement Services which is currently shared across Environmental Health and City Contract Services. It is recommended that an options report on integrated management and the development of the Bereavement Services is considered by Cabinet before considering the need for additional staff.

Task Group Response

At a Task Group meeting attended by the Corporate Director (Community Services) it was noted that the possibility of recruiting an additional member of staff would be assessed by the Service Head following the completion of the Integrated Report. The Interim Report noted that absence through sickness or leave stretched the Service severely as it was difficult to draft in other staff as they lacked the detailed knowledge and expertise required to deal with the complex and ancient records. It has been

noted that the Administrative Assistant forwarded his apologies to a recent Task Group meeting, which would have benefited from his attendance, in view of the sickness of the part time Assistant since his attendance at the meeting would have entailed closing the Cemetery Office for several hours.

The Task Group has already expressed concern that the Cemeteries staff are over-stretched with an increasing workload and consider the staffing issue to be of high priority.

Recommendation 3

That consideration is given to the digitisation and computerisation of Cemetery Records and Cemetery Management Systems.

Cost Indication (Where known): £83,000

Cabinet Response

Many cemeteries services are moving towards or have already completed the computerisation of cemeteries records and management systems. The Task Group report identifies that this one-off project would cost in the region of £83,000 and it should be considered as a project which could be spread over 2-3 years. If Cabinet was to support this it would be a growth bid for the 2006/07 budget process.

Task Group Response

The Task Group reiterates that this recommendation is essential to the Cemeteries Service. In addition, having visited Carleton Cemetery Office the Task Group noted that all cemetery records and documentation was housed in secure, fire-proof storage cabinets and it was vital that similar cabinets be acquired for the irreplaceable records currently stored in Morecambe Cemetery Office.

Recommendation 4

- a) That Lancaster set standards for its cemeteries, (to include the Charter for the Bereaved).
- b) That a baseline assessment be carried out of where Lancaster currently is with regard to the set standard when set.
- c) That detailed costings be produced for the work required in order to meet the standard.
- d) That revenue budgets be realigned and, where necessary, increased to maintain these standards.
- e) That a dedicated sundries budget (minimum £5,000) be created.
- f) That the Cemetery budget be amended in order to achieve the above recommendations.

Cost Indication (Where known): £5,000, other costs not known

Cabinet Response

Within the recommendations 4(b) and 4(c) are key areas of work which need to be completed to identify the gaps between what is currently provided and standards set by the Charter for the Bereaved – assuming this standard was to be signed up to and met. Without this further information, it is not possible to identify what commitment Cabinet would be entering into by signing up to the Charter.

Task Group Response

It is the opinion of the Task Group that Cabinet failed to recognise that it would be possible to work towards the adoption of the Charter for the Bereaved with minimal costs. The only essential outlay is the annual subscription charge of £255. The Audit Commission refers to the Charter in Best Value Inspection Reports and regards its adoption as a means of maintaining high standards in addition to providing a benchmark for us to judge our service delivery against other authorities. Identified shortcomings, which need addressing in order for this authority to be included in the Charter, include a weakness in the provision of information including leaflets and standards of grounds maintenance. The Task Group believe that once Health and Strategic Housing assume responsibility for the entire Cemetery Service budget gradual but visible improvements will be forthcoming at a moderate cost. A copy of the Charter for the Bereaved is attached (Appendix 1).

Recommendation 5

- a) That Health and Strategic Housing assumes management responsibility and budgetary control of both income and expenditure for cemeteries.
- b) That, prior to transfer, work is required to ensure that transferred budgets reflect true costs and if budgets do not meet costs these should be increased prior to transfer.

Cost Indication (Where known): Not known

Cabinet Response

This seeks to deal with issues raised by the current division of responsibility for cemeteries across two services. The response to recommendation 2 for Cabinet to consider an options report on integrated management for Bereavement Services also applies to this recommendation.

Task Group Response

At the time of writing the Task Group are pleased to note that Cabinet formally adopted the findings of the integrated management report on 25th April 2006 and that budgetary control has now been transferred to Health and Strategic Housing.

Recommendation 6

- a) That an Audit be undertaken of work required to ensure cemeteries comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- b) That a work programme be created.
- c) That this work programme be financed.

Cabinet Response

This approach has been adopted elsewhere in considering the application of DDA to playgrounds. In that case, work was commissioned externally then options presented to Cabinet on a work programme. The cost of commissioning such work has not been estimated by the Task Group, but would need to be a growth bid into the Budget process.

Task Group Response

The Task Group would ask Cabinet to reconsider this in the context of the Final Report.

Recommendation 7

That consideration be given to reviewing and improving the signage at the Council's Cemeteries and an initial budget of £5,000 be created.

Cost Indication (Where known): £5,000

Cabinet Response

The provision of new signage at Cemeteries would need to be a growth bid as part of the 2006/07 budget process.

Task Group Response

The Task Group consider the current signage far from adequate. John Moffat (Friends of Flaybrick Cemetery, Birkenhead) was critical of the signage at Lancaster Cemetery when he visited. Indeed he (like Task Group Members before him) had found it difficult to locate the cemetery entrance and commented that the education notice (OCNW) was the first thing that was noticed since the cemetery sign was obscured by overgrown foliage and in his opinion the notice was 'not welcoming.' It was extremely interesting that a visitor had highlighted this.

In view of this the Task Group would add the following recommendation:

Recommendation 7 (b)

That the Council agrees to write to the owners of Lancaster Cemetery Lodge requesting that the OCNW sign be either moved or made more discreet.



Entrance to Lancaster Cemetery – dominated by OCNW sign – Cemetery signage obscured

Recommendation 8

That the Cemeteries Task Group support the capital bid application to repair the damaged wall at Lancaster Cemetery and recommend that Cabinet include the project in their 2006/07 capital budget proposals as a matter of urgency and public safety.

Cabinet Response

The works required to Lancaster Cemetery wall have been submitted as a capital bid within the future capital programme.

Task Group Response

The Task Group are pleased that this application has been successful.

5. The Role of the Cemeteries Group

5.1 Terms of Reference

The group worked to the following terms of reference:

- To establish an understanding of the current situation, development and historical background to Council cemeteries, closed churchyards and burial grounds. This is to include Cemetery Lodges, Signage, Visitor facilities, Management arrangements, Buildings and structures, Historic status, Parking and Access, Planting, Plots, Animals, Memorials, Security and Woodland burials.
- To establish the Council's legal responsibilities in respect of the above and current funding arrangements including fees and charges.
- To establish current Council practice, in relation to how maintenance is managed and prioritised and to investigate how other Local Authorities deal with the maintenance of burial grounds and identify best practice from a risk management perspective.
- To establish the level of anti-social behaviour and security problems within the Council's cemeteries and consider possible solutions to these.
- To investigate public concern with the state of Council cemeteries at present.
- To consider Council service provision from a bereavement services perspective, including access to services by the ethnic community, compliance with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) etc.
- To consider the future options for the provision and development of Cemeteries and whether the Council should continue to operate a Cemeteries Services or support the development of an alternative form of provision.
- To make evidence based recommendations regarding the above issues.

5.2 Membership of the Group

The group comprises of Councillors David Kerr (Chairman), Evelyn Archer, Susan Bray, Sheila Denwood, John Harrison, Helen Helme, Janie Kirkman, Robert Redfern, Catriona Stamp and with support from, Liz Bateson (Democratic Services).

The group gratefully acknowledges the contributions and evidence freely given by:

- Stephen Mann (Public Health and Safety Manager, Health and Strategic Housing Services, Lancaster City Council)
- Clive Linehan (Administrative Assistant, Health and Strategic Housing Services, Lancaster City Council)
- Peter Loker (Corporate Director (Community Services), Lancaster City Council)

- Paul Cocker (Grounds Maintenance Operations Manager, Lancaster City Council)
- Andrew Kipling (Accountancy Assistant, Lancaster City Council)
- June Carswell (Superintendent Registrar) Carlisle City Council
- Roger Frankland (Lancaster Civic Society)
- Andrew and Anne Weston (Alan M Fawcett Funeral Directors), Jenny Darby (Co-operative Funeral Services), Paul Wilson (Preston Ireland Bowker Funeral Directors), Jane Nicholson (J Mason & Son Funeral Directors)
- Michelle Emery (Community Safety Officer, Lancaster City Council)
- Kate Coldwell, (Community Beat Manager (Lancashire Constabulary)
- Gerald Hurtley, Police Community Support Officer (Lancashire Constabulary)
- Steven Milce, Chief Housing Officer (Lancaster City Council)
- David Watmough, Neighbourhood Council Housing Manager (Lancaster City Council)
- John Moffat (Friends of Flaybrick Cemetery, Birkenhead)
- Keith Turner (Friends of Layton Cemetery)
- Suzi Moden (Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager, Blackpool Council)

5.3 Timetable of Meetings

Date of Meeting	Who gave evidence?	Issues scrutinised
16.06.05	Stephen Mann	Briefing on current situation of the Council's seven cemeteries
20.07.05	Stephen Mann Clive Linehan	Consideration of the Council's legal responsibilities as a Burial Authority. Fees and charges for burials. Dangerous headstones and the Memorial Safety Programme
29.07.05	Paul Cocker Andrew Kipling	Briefing on cemetery maintenance. Briefing with regard to income and expenditure of the Council's cemeteries.
16.11.05	Stephen Mann Clive Linehan	Activity update including success of 'Beautification Day', comparison with Carlisle Cemetery, Monument Stability Report, Charter for Bereaved Standards
06.12.05	Funeral Directors / Stone Masons	An informal meeting to discuss concerns/issues relating to

	Stephen Mann	administrative procedures, grounds maintenance, Cemetery rules and regulations and areas for improvement
13.01.06	Gerald Hurtle (PCSO), Kate Coldwell (Community Beat Manager), Michelle Emery (Community Safety Officer), David Watmough, (Neighbourhood Council Housing Manager) Stephen Mann/ Clive Linehan	Anti-social behaviour and vandalism within the Council's cemeteries. Members were briefed on the issue of Torrisholme Lodge – the press and public were excluded from the meeting for this item.
17.02.06	John Moffat (Friends of Flaybrick Cemetery), Keith Turner (Friends of Layton Cemetery, Blackpool) & Suzi Moden (Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager, Blackpool Council) Clive Linehan	An informal meeting to seek advice with regard to the possibility of establishing a Friends' Group in Lancaster. The meeting was preceded by a tour of Lancaster Cemetery.
27.02.06	Peter Loker, Corporate Director (Community Services) Steven Milce (Chief Housing Officer)	Discussions with regard to the Interim Report with the Corporate Director. An update with regard to the Cemetery lodge situation.
20.03.06	Steven Milce (Chief Housing Officer) Stephen Mann	Further update on Cemetery lodge situation. Woodland Burials – considering ways to improve the Council's two woodland burial sites. Discussions with regard to the feasibility of alternative cemetery service provision.
03.05.06	Stephen Mann, Clive Linehan	Consideration of draft final report.
16.06.06	Peter Loker Suzanne Lodge Stephen Mann	Consideration of Officers' comments and adoption of Final Report.

5.4 Site Visits

The following 'Site visits' were arranged in connection with the work of the Task Group:

Date of visit	Place of visit/ in conjunction with	Purpose of visit
30.06.05	Torrisholme & Hale Carr cemeteries , Morecambe With Stephen Mann and Clive Linehan	Included looking at woodland burial provisions, chapels, ground/path maintenance, vandalism, dog fouling, headstone safety programme.
13.10.05	Carlisle Cemetery June Carswell	To look at woodland burial site. Gain insight into maintenance. Photographs taken during this site visit are attached as Appendix 9.
18.10.05	Lancaster Cemetery Roger Frankland Stephen Mann, Clive Linehan	Members undertook a tour of the cemetery organised by the Civic Society with regard to the historical importance of the cemetery. Attention drawn to memorials in view of stability report undertaken by Cemetery Development Services.
16.11.05	Cemetery Office and Morecambe Cemetery Stephen Mann and Clive Linehan	Task group members visited Cemetery Offices to understand public contact with the Council from a bereavement services perspective and gain a greater insight into the nature of the work undertaken by Cemetery Office staff. A brief tour of Morecambe Cemetery was undertaken to look at the condition of the paths, grounds maintenance, examples of anti-social behaviour and dog fouling.
17.02.06	Lancaster Cemetery Clive Linehan, John Moffat (Friends of Flaybrick), Suzi	Several Members accompanied visitors from local Friends Groups on a

	Moden (Blackpool Council) & Keith Turner (Friends of Layton)	tour of Lancaster Cemetery, noting their observations.
26.04.06	Layton and Carleton Cemetery, Blackpool Suzi Moden and Keith Turner	To observe how the Friends Group operates and gain an insight into cemetery maintenance. Photographs relating to this site visit are attached as Appendix 10.

In addition to meetings and site visits the following notable events have also happened during the life-span of the Task Group.

5.5 Beautification Day – Torrisholme Cemetery – September 2005

Following a proposal by the Church of Latter Day Saints, 'Helping Hands Day' was jointly organised by the Church volunteers and Council Officers. Many supporters including Councillors David Kerr and Janie Kirkman turned up to perform tasks including bulb planting and it was agreed that this was a good example of partnership working. The Volunteers expressed their intention of returning in the spring when the results of their bulb planting would be visible.

An indication of the nature of the work undertaken by the volunteers is provided in Appendix 11.



Councillor Kerr and volunteers from the Church of Latter Day Saints

5.6 Promession Course - February 2006

Councillor Kerr and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for cemeteries, Councillor Joyce Pritchard, attended a presentation organised by Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council Cemetery and Crematorium Office on Promession, a more environmentally-friendly method of disposal of the deceased which was being developed in Sweden. Notes providing further details of this seminar are enclosed by the Chairman as Appendix 8.

5.7 Documentary Evidence Considered

- Albery, C & Wienrich, S ed., 2000, *The New Natural Death Handbook*, 3rd edition, Rider, Chatham.
- Gill, S & Fox, J, 2004, *The Dead Good Funerals Book*, 3rd edition, Engineers of the Imagination, Barrow in Furness.
- Haringey Council, 2005, *Cemeteries and Crematorium Scrutiny Review*.
- Home Office, January 2004, *Burial Law and Policy in the 21st Century – The need for a sensitive and sustainable approach*, London.
- House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs – 8th Report, April 2001, *Cemeteries*.
- Kirklees Metropolitan Council, July 2001, *The Maintenance of Church and Council Burial Grounds*.
- Lancaster City Council, 2003, *Cemetery – Rules and Regulations*.
- Leeds City Council, 2004, *Maintenance of Cemeteries and Crematoria*.
- Tameside Metropolitan Borough, 2004, *Review of the Council's Cemeteries and Crematorium Service*.
- Torbay Council, 2005, *Review of Cemeteries, Overview and Scrutiny Committee*,

Internet Sites

- Native Woodland Natural Burial Sites-
www.igreens.org.uk/woodland_burial_sites_uk.htm
- Bereavement Services Portal Operator/Owner Details
www.bereavement-services.org
- Cemeteries and Burial Grounds Practice Note 1: (2005)
www.voa.gov.uk/instructions/chapter/rating_manual
- Bexley Council website
parks&openspaces@bexley.gov.uk

Leaflets considered

- Notes on Saving Cemeteries – National Federation of Cemetery Friends (1987)
- Bereavement Services, Carlisle City Council
- Brocklands Woodland Burial Leaflet
- Woodland Burial – Torrisholme & Hale Carr Cemeteries – Lancaster City Council Information Leaflet
- Westall Park Woodland Burial Ground Leaflet
- Hinton Park Woodland Burial Ground Leaflet
- Linthorpe Cemetery – Community Events and Activities Leaflet

Newspaper articles including:

- Daily Express (16.02.06) *A Grave Offence*.
- Lancaster Guardian (03.02.06) *The Graveyard Shift*. Article written by Gayle Rouncivell.

6. Status of the Report

This report is the work of the Cemeteries Task Group, on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and where opinions are expressed it should be pointed out that they are not necessarily those of Lancaster City Council.

While we have sought to draw on this review to make recommendations and suggestions that are helpful to the Council, our work has been designed solely for the purpose of discharging our terms of reference agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Accordingly, our work cannot be relied upon to identify every area of strength, weakness or opportunity for improvement.

This report is addressed to the Cabinet of Lancaster City Council for whom it has been prepared. The Task Group take no responsibility for any Member or Officer acting in their individual capacities or to other third parties acting on it.

7. Background & Context

The Task Group was established as a result of a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2005. This emanated from guidelines established by the Health and Safety Executive concerning memorial safety following a number of reported fatalities and serious accidents caused by falling memorials. The Health and Safety Commission report in 2004 noted that there had been 3 deaths and 18 other serious accidents from unstable memorials within the previous 5 years across the country.

The presentation by the Public Health and Safety Manager, detailed current issues within the seven Council Cemeteries and closed churchyards for which the Council is responsible. It was noted that at the time of the establishment of the Cemeteries Task Group, Health and Strategic Housing was responsible for policy, enforcement and the effective administration of burial records including income from various fees and charges. Current management of cemetery policy and administrative procedures was transferred to the Public Health and Safety Manager in September 2001; routine administration is undertaken by the Cemeteries Assistant with additional support from the Senior Administrative Officer to maintain a reasonable service delivery and provide cover for sickness and holidays. City Contract Services were responsible for grounds maintenance including grave digging, grass cutting, repair and maintenance of paths, fences and buildings and had sole responsibility for all cemeteries expenditure budgets. A supervisor and two grave diggers were responsible for this although on occasions they were diverted to other non-cemeteries tasks by the City Contract Services Operations Manager.

In addition to outlining the memorial safety programme the presentation highlighted enforcement issues, repair and maintenance issues and problems with anti-social behaviour. It was apparent that in view of current workloads, budgeting constraints and responsibilities, the Cemeteries Service was unlikely to improve and would remain in the bottom quartile of authorities when compared to the Charter for the Bereaved Best Value Assessment score.

In addition to the 7 Council-owned Cemeteries, the Authority has the responsibility of maintaining the walls, paths, trees and memorials in 'closed' church graveyards. It was noted that the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order (LACO) 1977 empowered an authority with prescriptive and obligatory powers. Section 4 of this document relates to repair and access issues and states that it is the duty of a burial authority to keep a cemetery in good order and repair. This includes buildings, walls and fences and other buildings provided for use therewith. Based on visual evidence, including slides and site visits, the Task Group believes that the Council does not fulfil its obligations under Section 4 of LACO and there is a clear need for additional funding and measures to address this.

Whilst the district reflects national trends with approximately 75% of people choosing to be cremated, there are still approximately 400 burials a year. Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of burials in each of the 7 Cemeteries over the last three years whilst Appendix 3 provides burial data for the last 8 years in the format of a graph.

Facilities

Appendix 4 provides an indication of the location of the Council-owned cemeteries in the district.

The following table provides an indication of the facilities which are provided in the Cemeteries for the convenience of the bereaved and cemetery visitors.

	Benches	Litter Bins	Water Points	Chapel (seats)	Toilets	Notice Boards
Lancaster	1	5	5	None of the 3 chapels in use – all need renovation	None	2 – one at each entrance but need updating
Carnforth	8	2	2	No chapel	None	1 in poor condition
Scotforth	7	9	4	60 seats – inside poor condition exterior good	2 but only 1 usable no hand-basins or lights	3 – poor condition and need updating
More-cambe	0	1 and 1 dog waste bin	0 – water tank to collect rain water	No chapel	None	None
Skerton	1	6	4	60 seats – inside good condition – exterior reasonable	Not in use	1 – needs updating
Torris-holme	13	4	1	60 seats but in view of vandalism (subjected to 3 arson attacks since 2002) - not in use for last 2 years	Not in use	1 – in poor condition
Hale Carr	1	3	3	60 seats – good general condition inside – exterior needs painting	1 inside chapel but chapel doors locked	1 – needs updating

Parking

None of the cemeteries were constructed for modern vehicular access and there is no specific parking provision within any of the cemeteries. In view of the historic narrowness of the paths inconsiderate parking can lead to obstruction of paths and disruption to funeral corteges. However, in view of limited public transport, (as in the case of access to Lancaster cemetery) difficulties with off-site parking, (as illustrated in Torrisholme cemetery) and requirements of accessibility for disabled visitors, it is not possible to prevent visitors from bringing their cars into the cemeteries. Carnforth and Morecambe cemeteries are not suitable for vehicular access, and parking difficulties are exacerbated by this restriction. Other authorities appear to experience similar problems with regard to parking.

7.1 Service Responsibilities

The following table provides an indication of the split of responsibilities between Health and Strategic Housing and City Council (Direct) Services at the beginning, and for most of the duration of the Task Group.

Health and Strategic Housing	City Council (Direct) Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Administration of Sales of graves, Re-purchase of graves and re-assignments, Burials, Erection of memorials, Maintenance of records and registers, Headstone safety programme, Memorial mason's registration scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Grounds maintenance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enforcement of Rules and Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Repair and maintenance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Exhumations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Grave digging
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Public Health funerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Attendance at funerals and Back filling of graves
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Family history/grave searches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reporting of unauthorised memorials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">General enquiries and complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Headstone safety testing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Setting fees and charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ordering of plaques for Ashes section, trees, benches
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responsible for income budgets only	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responsible for all expenditure budgets

The Task Group believed that the sharing of responsibilities with regard to Cemeteries caused a wide variety of problems and a lack of strategic management and control of the service as a whole. It was the Task Group's view that the Cemetery Service would be more efficient if management and budgets were consolidated and located in one place and that this should be in Health and Strategic Housing.

The Interim Report recommended that Health and Strategic Housing assume responsibility for all aspects of the Cemetery Service budget and this resulted in Cabinet requesting an Integrated Report to consider this proposal further. This was considered by Cabinet on 25th April, 2006 when it was agreed that 'Cemetery management is a core function of Health and Strategic Housing' and that Health and Strategic Housing was best placed to manage an integrated service.

8. Findings

8.1 CEMETERY MAINTENANCE

All of the Council's cemeteries are suffering from a lack of long-term investment in the repair and maintenance of buildings, paths, fences, signage etc. The Task Group is optimistic that with the transfer of the Cemeteries maintenance budget to Health and Strategic Housing the available money can be managed more strategically and standards will improve. However, it is evident that a great deal of work is required to bring standards up to an acceptable level. In the opinion of a frequent visitor to Torrisholme Cemetery, it 'could do with a facelift and good clean up.'

General maintenance

The Task Group were alarmed to learn that the Council had received a letter from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission dated 27 June 2005, which stated that maintenance 'does not currently reach the required standard.' The letter is attached at Appendix 4, and previously circulated to Cabinet with the Interim Report. The letter suggests the War Commission assume the task of maintenance themselves and should be perceived as an indictment of maintenance standards and an embarrassment to the authority.

John Moffat (from Friends of Flaybrick cemetery) provided Members with some observations he noted during a tour of Lancaster Cemetery – these included a dead tree behind the chapel, self-seeded trees growing out of graves, graves obscured by rhododendrons, ivy eroding masonry on the wall and the poor state of the pot-holed and unswept paths. Similar observations with regard to the state of the paths and self-seeding trees in the Council's cemeteries have been made by concerned members of the public and by the Task Group whilst visiting the cemeteries.



Brambles self-set in shrubs in Lancaster cemetery

Paths

The state of the paths has been the subject of many complaints, particularly from elderly people and resulted in a number of insurance claims – the Task Group have been informed that the Council's insurers have expressed concern regarding inspection and repair work being carried out. Evidently in order to reduce the likelihood of accidents, increased premiums or removal of insurance cover, and even costly litigation the Council needs to address this issue.



Carnforth Cemetery – a path in need of repair

The Task Group accepts that any improvements to cemeteries will be gradual due to financial necessity and that costings for repair and maintenance would evolve over the next 12 months following the transfer and consolidation of cemetery management. The Task Group agree that an assessment of the state of the paths in each cemetery together with quotations for repair work is required and, if in places total replacement of sections of path is required then this may be the subject of a growth bid/Star Chamber exercise or a bid for capital expenditure in 2007/08.

Memorials

A separate report with regard to the Memorial Safety Programme was considered by Cabinet along with the Interim Report in January 2006. The Task Group are of the opinion that this sensitive issue had been dealt with in a sensitive manner and the Cemeteries Service have gone to great lengths to keep the public and press informed of developments. It would appear that the Memorial Safety publicity has generated interest in the historic and cultural aspects of the cemeteries with the Guardian producing an article entitled 'The graveyard shift' in February, 2006. This featured several of the notable memorials situated in Lancaster Cemetery and extracts have been transcribed in Appendix 5.

With regard to enforcement issues, site visits and evidence from Officers indicate that there are many contraventions with regard to permissible memorials and foliage and it was noted how difficult it was to remove unacceptable memorials and shrubs or conifers. However, the Task Group noted that Carlisle, a beacon council, also suffers from this problem and this could emanate from the noticeable shift in how the public deal with grief, as was shown with the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Suggestions to reduce this include greater co-operation with stone masons.

Chapels

There are only three chapels in working order throughout the Council's cemeteries and these are at Scotforth, Skerton and Hale Carr. There are no chapels at either Morecambe or Carnforth cemeteries. Four chapels are currently out of use, three at Lancaster and one at Torrisholme, the latter being due to repeated arson attacks.

The House of Commons Select Committee Report (2001) suggests that Council's should pay greater attention to the cultural significance of its cemeteries.

Opened in 1855 with three Grade II listed chapels designed by Edward Paley, Lancaster Cemetery is included in the National Register of Parks and Gardens. Unfortunately none of these three chapels are currently in use. A Condition Survey undertaken by Lancashire County Council Property Group in 2000 estimated that in order to fully restore the chapels the sum of £85,000 would be required. Property Services are currently obtaining estimates with regard to repairing damaged roofs to make the chapels watertight and this will be funded from the General Fund Repair and Maintenance budget.

It is possible that if a future use can be found for a chapel, a lesser sum would be required for repairs, which could potentially make at least one of the chapels usable and the Task Group are keen that some use is found for the chapels. A variety of future uses have been suggested including a storage area, a tea-room and even the possibility of one of the chapels being used for services. The Task Group agree that neglect of these Grade II listed buildings could result in substantial cost implications to the Council in the future.



The non-conformist Grade II listed chapel at Lancaster Cemetery

One of the concerns expressed by Funeral Directors was in relation to the continued closure of Torrisholme Chapel, which has been the subject of 3 arson attacks since 2002, and is currently undergoing extensive repairs. Whilst it appears that the chapel is likely to re-open imminently, the chapel's closure for the last 2 years has resulted in a loss of income to the Cemetery Service as well an inconvenience, and indeed extra expense to families, since church fees are higher than chapel fees.

Recommendation 9

- (a) That an assessment of the state of the paths in all of the cemeteries is undertaken together with quotations for repair work, and, if in places total replacement of sections of path is required, then this may be the subject of a growth bid (or possible capital expenditure) in 2007/08.
- (b) That consideration is given to the future usage of the 3 Grade II listed chapels within Lancaster Cemetery.

8.2 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

One of the objectives of this review has been to highlight areas of public concern with regard to anti-social behaviour and consider ways to reduce these problems. Police representatives have attended a Task Group meeting to discuss these. It was noted that there have been incidents of vandalism to headstones and memorials, occasional damage to water-pipes and thefts of vases and flowers. Fortunately such incidents are quite isolated, however, they cause distress to families and have cost implications. An idea of these costs is provided below:

Date / Cemetery	Nature of Damage	Cost to repair
August 2005 - Carnforth	Water-pipe sawn through	£ 72.00
August 2005 - Skerton	Car backed into water-pipe	£ 120.00
October 2005 – Torrisholme	Arson attack on garage storing funeral drapes	£ 460.00

Between 2001 and 2005 there had been 28 reports of anti-social behaviour/vandalism including children playing on scaffolding and cars travelling at speed at night. Members of the public have also expressed concern at the congregation of young people in the cemeteries, which is perceived as intimidating and inappropriate.

The Task Group have considered the merits of locking the cemeteries at night to deter these occurrences and have noted that there has been a disinclination to adopt this practice previously in view of a cost implication. In the opinion of one concerned resident, the failure to secure the cemeteries at night 'is asking for vandals.' However, it seems that a frequent visitor to Hale Carr Cemetery and several of her associates have offered to perform this service on a voluntary basis, and, if an agreement can be drawn up with the Public Health and Safety Manager on this operational issue, the Task Group would support this proposal. The Task Group would hope that in future, if Friends Groups are established this could be one of the activities that might be performed in more of the Council's cemeteries.

With regard to the grazing of horses at Hale Carr cemetery (witnessed by Task Group Members on a site visit) this was felt as showing a lack of respect for the deceased and to be inappropriate. The Task Group requested Legal Services investigate this issue and this request was reported in the local press. It has subsequently been reported that this problem has recurred in recent weeks but any further recurrence would be eliminated if the cemeteries were locked at night.

Dog fouling has been reported as a major cause for concern in all of the Council's cemeteries. The Council has received verbal and written complaints from the public with regard to dog fouling and dogs being exercised without leads, contrary to Council policy. A letter in response to a Press Release with regard to the Quest for Improvement in the City's Cemeteries, maintained that the public should not permit their dogs to 'run loose through the graves fouling everywhere' and 'it was not nice to arrive at your loved ones resting place with dog muck on the grave or headstone.' Another concerned visitor to a cemetery complained that it was 'absolutely disgraceful' that some dog owners were allowing their dogs to run over the graves and failed to pick up dog faeces. During the site visits to both Morecambe and Torrisholme Cemetery Members witnessed several unleashed dogs being exercised.

Enquiries with the Dog Warden with regard to complaints relating to the Council's Cemeteries have produced the following:

Cemetery	Number of Complaints	Dates of Complaints
Hale Carr	3	26/03/02 - 27/10/05
Skerton	3	01/10/04 - 06/03/06
Morecambe	6	28/10/96 - 16/08/04
Lancaster	3	01/06/01 - 25/09/01
Scotforth	2	21/05/97 - 10/03/03
Torrisholme	3	18/04/05 - 19/12/05

The Task Group recognise that the Clean Neighbourhood Act, which takes effect in April 2006, will provide the Council with more effective powers to control dog fouling. Indeed it will allow local authorities to designate areas where the exercise of dogs would be prohibited. The Task Group are reluctant to impose a total ban on dogs in the cemeteries since this will impede the ability of responsible dog owners to frequent the cemetery as visitors. The Task Group believes that the Council needs to adopt a zero tolerance approach to dog fouling and other forms of anti-social behaviour and that any new signage within cemeteries should reflect this.

The lack of provision for disposal of dog waste in the cemeteries has been noted and the Task Group considered whether the provision of at least one dog bin in each cemetery would be alleviate what appears to be the chief area of anti-social behaviour. Enquiries indicate that each dog bin would cost approximately £185 and would be mounted on a stand and set on a concrete slab. However, it has been suggested that improvements to signage on existing litter bins to indicate that it is acceptable to dispose of suitably wrapped dog waste within the current bins would help address the problem whilst keeping costs down.

Recommendation 10

That in order to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour Cabinet should consider implementing the following measures:

- a) That the signage on the current litter bins within the Council's cemeteries be revised to indicate that it is acceptable to dispose of suitably wrapped dog waste within them.
- b) That new signage (if forthcoming) should reflect the Council's zero tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour.
- c) That arrangements are considered for the securing of the Council's cemeteries over night to deter anti-social behaviour.
- d) That consideration is given to ensure measures are introduced to reduce the likelihood of further arson attacks to Torrisholme chapel.

8.3 FRIENDS GROUPS

Representatives from Friends Groups in Birkenhead and Blackpool were invited to an informal meeting to provide the Task Group with advice and relate their experiences in establishing and maintaining Friends Groups. John Moffat who had been instrumental in the establishment of Friends of Flaybrick Cemetery in Birkenhead in 1983 and Keith Turner from Friends of Layton Cemetery, Blackpool and Suzi Moden, Cemeteries Manager at Blackpool provided a vivid insight into the nature of their work and the advantages of forming such associations.

The benefits of a formally constituted charity registered Friends Group include good leverage into funding: Flaybrick had benefited from 'Awards for All' in addition to Heritage lottery funding and a feasibility study was underway with regard to turning a disused chapel into a bat study centre. With regard to the Friends of Layton cemetery, it was noted that Blackpool council had allocated them an old office which was staffed by volunteers 5 days a week and enabled families to look up their family history via a computer as well as providing informative cemetery tours. It was noted that both Friends Groups had originally been formed following vandalism in the cemeteries and had been successful in reducing this.

At a Site Visit to Layton Cemetery, Members of the Task Group were impressed by the facilities enjoyed by the Friends Group, and were informed that the office was frequently used by the local Police in the evenings, providing a visible Police presence, which they believed had helped to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour within the cemetery.

The Task Group recognise that Lancaster Cemetery would be most likely to attract heritage funding in view of the Grade II listed chapels, however interest in the formation of Friends Groups has initially come from Torrisholme, Hale Carr and Skerton cemeteries. The Task Group was impressed by the involvement of local families in the 'Beautification Day' in Torrisholme and aware of their concerns about anti-social behaviour.

However, the Task Group recognise that given current staff resources it would not be feasible to consider formally establishing more than one Friends Group at this stage.

Recommendation 11

That consideration is given to formally establishing a pilot Friend's Group, with a view to creating more if successful.

8.4 CEMETERY LODGES

The Council owns only three cemetery lodges which are let on a introductory/secure tenancy with the right to buy. These lodges are located at Scotforth, Lancaster and Torrisholme cemetery. The issue of Cemetery Lodges was initially raised during a Task Group meeting which considered anti-social behaviour and vandalism and in which the Police were invited to participate. Subsequent to these discussions Torrisholme Lodge became vacant and the Task Group has discussed this issue in detail and made a number of proposals with regard to its future use.

Concerned local residents have written to the authority and addressed the Task Group with regard to the future of Torrisholme Lodge, requesting that the lodge be removed from council housing stock. Some Members of the Task Group share this view and believe the Lodge is inappropriate for family use. It has also been suggested that the Lodge could be utilised by the Cemetery Service as an integrated bereavement service. Members supported the suggestion that the lodge be used to accommodate key workers and requested the Head of Council Housing Services make enquiries with regard to this. Whilst there was no interest in the property being used to house key workers, the Police have viewed the premises and appear interested in using the property as a base for community policing. At the time of writing this report discussions with regard to this interest are ongoing.

Recommendation 12

That the Task Group's first preference with regard to the future use of Torrisholme Lodge is that in the event of the Police confirming interest in the property consideration be given to removing the lodge from Council housing stock, as in the Blackpool example.

If this is unsuccessful, the Task Group would support that the Lodge should remain in Council housing stock, subject to a sensitive lettings policy and, if possible, not let to a family with young children. Boundaries and a garden area should be defined and where possible reasonable measures taken to ensure mitigation between the conflicts that could arise with regard to the use of the Lodge as housing and its location in a cemetery.

8.5 WOODLAND BURIALS

At the time of the submission of the Interim Report Cabinet requested that the Task Group addressed the 'provision of providing woodland burial sites in terms of service enhancement and cost efficiency ... and standard setting in the future.' In terms of municipal provision, woodland burial sites are relatively young, the first being established in Carlisle approximately 11 years ago. Research indicates that there are approximately 160 woodland sites in the UK owned by churches, local authorities or private landowners reflecting the growing interest in this type of resting place. The

table below illustrates that there has been limited interest in the Council's current woodland burial sites, particularly that at Hale Carr cemetery.

Location of Woodland Burial & date of opening	Number of spaces When opened	Number of burials Up to 15 th March, 2006	Number of reserved spaces
Hale Carr (1998)	104	7	12
Torrisholme (1996)	180	32 (+ 11 interments of cremated remains)	37

Currently there is no existing management plan in relation to woodland burials and in order to improve the Council's two woodland burial sites a management plan needs to be drawn up, priority being given to Hale Carr. This management plan needs to involve the City Conservation Officer, other operators and City Contract Services and needs to create a long-term vision as to whether the site should be meadowland, woodland or shrubland, depending on ground conditions.



Torrisholme Woodland Burial Site

The House of Commons Select Report stipulates that it is important that management of a cemetery for nature conservation purposes is not regarded as an excuse for neglect. This highlights the need for a management plan and the

recommendations listed below provide an indication of how the Council's woodland burial sites can be effectively enhanced.

Councillor Helme has donated a number of trees which will be planted in the woodland areas, and Councillor Kerr has donated a spade with which to plant them.

Recommendation 13

That the Cemeteries Task Group recommends that policies following best practice be adopted to improve the woodland burial areas, these include, but are not limited to:

- a) Plant more trees, shrubs and bulbs, of a wider range of species, particularly those which encourage native wildlife, and those which would add to the visual attractiveness of the area. This is to be done in order to produce natural-looking woodland groves/burial areas, which are of sufficient size to attract use by the public. Development of a native meadowland should be prioritised at Hale Carr. A report to Overview and Scrutiny entitled 'Flower Beds and Urban Meadows' (June 2005) noted that in order to create areas richer in biodiversity wildflower landscaping was essential.
- b) Formulate plans for developing woodland and native burial areas with regard to tree spacing arrangements, grave location and markers.
- c) Develop a management plan with regard to mowing and planting.
- d) Set aside wildlife friendly areas e.g. 'hedgehog hotel' log-piles.
- e) Place signage explaining woodland/wildlife management aims and practice.
- f) Promote and encourage woodland burial by improved information and improved liaison with Funeral Directors and Friends Groups, if established; particularly with regard to allowing people a wide range of choice over such things as: type of coffin, eg. cardboard/willow, transport of the coffin, eg. not necessarily a hearse, design and ownership of the ceremony and participation in the burial.

8.6 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDING OF THE CEMETERY SERVICE

The Task Group was requested to consider the feasibility of establishing an alternative cemetery provision service. Research undertaken indicates that this does not occur where local authorities are not responsible for the local crematorium. A search of all cemeteries in Lancashire, Cumbria, Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire revealed that none of the cemeteries were run by private operators with the exception of the privately owned woodland or native burial sites. Two cemeteries were run by a charity or trust. Furthermore evidence in the form of Valuation Reports for the Department of Constitutional Affairs (2005), Practice Note 1 states, "accounts returned have not disclosed any instances of operating profits being earned from this class of hereditament ... it may be concluded that since most local authority cemeteries are not capable of being operated for profit, they must be valued on the contractor's basis." The table below verifies that the Cemetery Service does not make a profit and is therefore unlikely to attract the interest of a private company.

<u>Expenditure</u>	2004/05 Actual £	2005/06 Revised £	2006/07 Estimate	2007/2008 Forecast	Details
Employee Costs	0	0	53,900	60,400	
Transport costs	0	0	6,000	6,100	
Grounds Maintenance	199,803	131,000	169,800	167,300	General upkeep
Grave Excavation	0	68,700	70,300	71,700	Previously included in grounds maintenance
Memorial Safety work	19,923	46,300	4,000	4,100	Works to make headstones safe
Repairs & Maintenance	178	6,000	6,100	6,200	Paths & fences within cemeteries
Other costs –premises	12,677	15,300	16,400	16,900	Rates, insurance, Electricity, water
Premises costs	232,581	267,300	266,600	266,200	
Supplies & Services	1,148	9,100	9,300	9,500	General materials Memorial plaques
Support Services	116,685	112,300	116,200	120,700	Internal recharges
Capital charges	5,300	6,200	6,200	6,200	Notional internal charge for use of assets
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	355,714	394,900	478,200	489,500	
INCOME					
Interment fees	(110,054)	(112,000)	(117,500)	(119,900)	Interment of coffins and cremated remains
Memorial fees	(12,414)	(13,600)	(14,200)	(14,500)	Permit to erect a memorial
Sale of Grave space	(48,576)	(45,000)	(47,200)	(48,100)	Exclusive right to a Burial
Sale of memorial plaques	(22,424)	(22,500)	(23,600)	(24,100)	Garden of Remembrance & Woodland burial areas
Other income	(4,228)	(4,500)	(4,700)	(4,800)	Includes hire of chapels and rent income
Total Income	(197,696)	(218,800)	(222,100)	(225,500)	
<u>NET TOTAL</u>	158,018	197,600	207,200	211,400	

Research indicates that some authorities provide a private grave maintenance service. Bexley Council provides this service and an indication of the prices they charge is shown in Appendix 7. This is something that could be considered in the future, however this would entail a great deal of administration and the Cemetery Service does not currently possess the staff resources to undertake this at the present time. Moreover, any additional income emanating from this service might have to be balanced against higher maintenance expectations and the likelihood of an increasing number of complaints from those dissatisfied with the level of service provided.

The Task Group are aware of the substantial financial ramifications of the memorial safety programme and how this has adversely affected the possibility of securing resources to implement additional recommendations with cost implications. Whilst the Government has highlighted the urgency of addressing memorial safety, the financial costs of this statutory duty rest solely with the local authority.

The House of Commons Select Committee Eighth Report identified that local authorities needed to devote substantially more resources to cemeteries if they are able to effectively address the serious problems which have led to cemeteries being depicted as 'unsafe, littered, vandalised, unkempt, [many] cemeteries shame all society in their lack of respect for the dead and the bereaved.'

The Task Group strongly agree that the Council should make the Government aware that central funding is necessary to enable the authority to implement the major changes in the approach to burial practice that the Government seeks.

Recommendation 14

- a) That the Cemetery Service is not sufficiently profitable to attract alternative cemetery providers.
- b) That consideration be given to providing a private grave maintenance service when additional staff resources permit, and if there is a proven need.
- c) That Council inform the Government that funding from Central Government is vital and must be forthcoming in order to improve cemetery standards.
- d) That the Cabinet visit Lancaster Cemetery to see for themselves the state of disrepair of the Grade II listed chapels, poor paths and limitations of current ground maintenance and gain an insight into the potential of this historic cemetery.

8. Conclusion

The Task Group recognises that the provision of Cemeteries is a vital service provided by the Council and is acutely aware of the sensitivity of the issues covered in this report. Society continues to place a great deal of significance on the proper disposal of the deceased, this being clearly illustrated by public reaction to events at Alder Hey. The House of Commons Select Committee Report in 2001 recognised the role of cemeteries in providing a 'place for retreat and contemplation' and encouraged local authorities to address their cemetery provision, bearing in mind that, 'cemeteries which are run down, crammed, overgrown and unsafe do no service to the bereaved at a particularly vulnerable time in their lives.' Clearly the management of the cemetery needs to reflect its purpose in serving the bereaved and therefore a safe well-cared for environment is essential. With this in mind the Task Group has made a number of recommendations to raise the standards within the Council's cemeteries.

The purpose of this report has been to establish an understanding of the current situation relating to the Council's cemeteries focusing on Management arrangements, maintenance, facilities and ways to increase public satisfaction and standards in general as well as provide an update with regard to the recommendations made in the Interim Report to Cabinet in January 2006.

9. Appendices

- 1. Charter for the Bereaved**
- 2. Burial Statistics**
- 3. Burials Data Graph**
- 4. Map indicating location of the 7 Council-owned cemeteries**
- 5. Commonwealth War Graves Commission Letter**
- 6. Extracts from 'The Graveyard Shift' – Lancaster Guardian.**
- 7. Private Grave Maintenance**
- 8. Some Notes on Promession by Councillor Kerr (Chairman)**
- 9. Photographs relating to the Site Visit to Carlisle Cemetery.**
- 10. Photographs relating to the Site Visit to Layton and Carleton Cemeteries, Blackpool.**
- 11. Photographs relating to the 'Beautification Day' at Torrisholme Cemetery.**



THE CHARTER IDENTIFIES THE FOLLOWING 33 RIGHTS

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| <i>Burial procedure</i> | 1 | It is your right to have a burial organised and conducted in a dignified and orderly manner, supported by competent, professional and caring cemetery staff. |
| | 2 | It is your right to inspect statutory cemetery records. |
| <i>Grave choice</i> | 3 | It is your right to purchase a private grave for a period not exceeding 100 years. (This "Right of Burial" is a grave for one or more burials, and upon which you can place a memorial. To this purchase cost, a burial fee is also payable.) |
| | 4 | It is your right to choose to be buried in an unpurchased grave. (You cannot reserve space for further burials in this type of grave, nor do you have any right to place a memorial. Further un-related burials will occur in the future, the grave being "re-cycled". For each burial, a fee is payable.) |
| <i>Cemetery memorials</i> | 5 | It is your right to place a memorial within the constraints of regulations in force or to leave the grave unmarked. |
| | 6 | It is your right and responsibility to maintain a memorial upon a grave during the period of grave rights granted to you. The memorial cannot be disturbed or moved during this period without your express permission, unless it poses a safety hazard. The safe erection and maintenance of the memorial is your responsibility. |
| | 7 | Except where Charter members are the sole suppliers of memorials, it is your right to use any memorial mason of your choice, provided they are not prohibited by the Charter member. |
| <i>Baby and infant graves</i> | 8 | It is your right to be offered an individual grave for a baby or infant. |
| | 9 | It is your right to be able to purchase an adult grave for the burial of a baby or infant, with sufficient depth remaining to allow adult burials. |
| <i>Burials in private land</i> | 10 | It is your right to receive factual information on burial in private land eg. gardens, farms, orchards, etc. |
| <i>Cremation procedure</i> | 11 | It is your right to organise and conduct a cremation in a dignified and orderly manner, supported by competent, professional and caring crematorium staff. |
| | 12 | It is your right to inspect the crematorium under normal working conditions. |
| <i>Cremated remains and memorialisation</i> | 13 | It is your right to be offered a Book of Remembrance memorial, set in a Hall of Remembrance. This must include a designated place for floral tributes. |
| <i>Ceremonies and belief</i> | 14 | It is your right to hold a burial or cremation service at the cemetery or crematorium and define the type of music and ceremony. |

Charter for the Bereaved continued

- 15 It is your right to define the type of religious or secular (non-religious) format of the service.
- Coffins and alternatives* 16 It is your right to choose the type and design of coffin, within the constraints of availability, regulations and safe materials.
- 17 It is your right to obtain a coffin via your Charter member (bio-degradable type.)
- Communication* 18 It is your right to receive a prompt response to any form of communication within the times specified by each Charter member.
- 19 It is your right to be given a table of cemetery and crematorium fees upon request.
- Environmental issues* 20 It is your right to be made aware of all known environmental issues relating to bereavement services. (Full details are given in the Reference Copy of the Charter for the Bereaved).
- Social and community aspects* 21 It is your right to receive a service that recognises your needs, without unfairness or discrimination eg. religious belief, ethnic needs, disability, etc.
- Funerals without a Funeral Director (independent funerals)* 22 It is your right to organise a funeral without the use of a funeral director.
- 23 It is your right, as executor (or next of kin) to be given the body by a mortuary, hospital, etc. in order to carry out a funeral.
- 24 It is your right to be given a leaflet by your Charter member describing how to arrange an independent funeral.
- Maintenance of grounds and gravedigging* 25 It is your right to be shown a specified standard of grounds maintenance. Where standards fail to meet the specification, you have the right to complain.
- Regulations* 26 It is your right to be given a list of regulations used by your Charter member.
- 27 It is your right to be given a written explanation of the reason why a regulation has been used to restrict or otherwise influence your rights.
- Staff and expertise* 28 It is your right to receive a quality service provided by trained and qualified staff. Where service standards fail, you have a right to question the level of expertise shown and to receive assurances regarding the ability of those involved.
- Inspection* 29 It is your right to be given an inspection of the cemetery or crematorium at any reasonable time.
- 30 It is your right to be given a copy of the "Guiding Principles of Burial and Cremation Services" or the "Code of Cremation Practice" under which your Charter member operates.



- Grievance procedure* 31 It is your right to use the grievance procedure if you are dissatisfied about any service provided by your Charter member. You can complain "on the spot" if you have the opportunity. If you continue to be dissatisfied, a series of stages leading to arbitration can be followed. Copies of the grievance procedure are available from your Charter member. Any Charter member who fails to offer the specified rights will have their Charter membership withdrawn.
- Using a Funeral Director* 32 It is your right to be given a copy of the item "Information on using a funeral director" (from the Reference Copy of the Charter for the Bereaved) by your Charter member. A small fee may be payable. This describes the funeral "package", the absence of price transparency, the impact of large commercial firms, funeral pre-payment plans, etc.
- Embalming* 33 It is your right to be given a copy of the item "Information on Embalming" (from the Reference Copy of the Charter for the Bereaved) by your Charter member. A small fee may be payable. This describes the process of embalming, often referred to as cosmetic treatment by funeral directors. It addresses the issues of environmental impact and whether the process is necessary.

IMPROVING SERVICES IN THE FUTURE

The IBCA have identified many "targets" to continuously improve the service for the bereaved. These may become rights after consultation and discussion. They are detailed in the Reference Copy of the Charter for the Bereaved, which is used by each Charter member. These targets often reflect new funeral innovations in various parts of the country but cannot be guaranteed nationwide. As they may be of interest to you, they are briefly described below.

- Burial procedure*
- Charter members will develop national service standards regarding the reception and handling of funerals.
 - Charter members will improve protection against inclement weather at burial ceremonies.
- Grave choice*
- Charter members will consider improving grave choice by offering three grave designs; the lawn type with a headstone; the traditional grave with a full memorial; and a natural option such as woodland burial.
 - Charter members will support a change in the law to allow the re-use of old graves, particularly in areas where burial is not possible due to a shortage of new ground.
 - Charter members will provide graves for cremated remains.
- Cemetery memorials*
- Charter members will encourage greater artistic input into memorials. A memorial should reflect individuality and the spirit of the community.

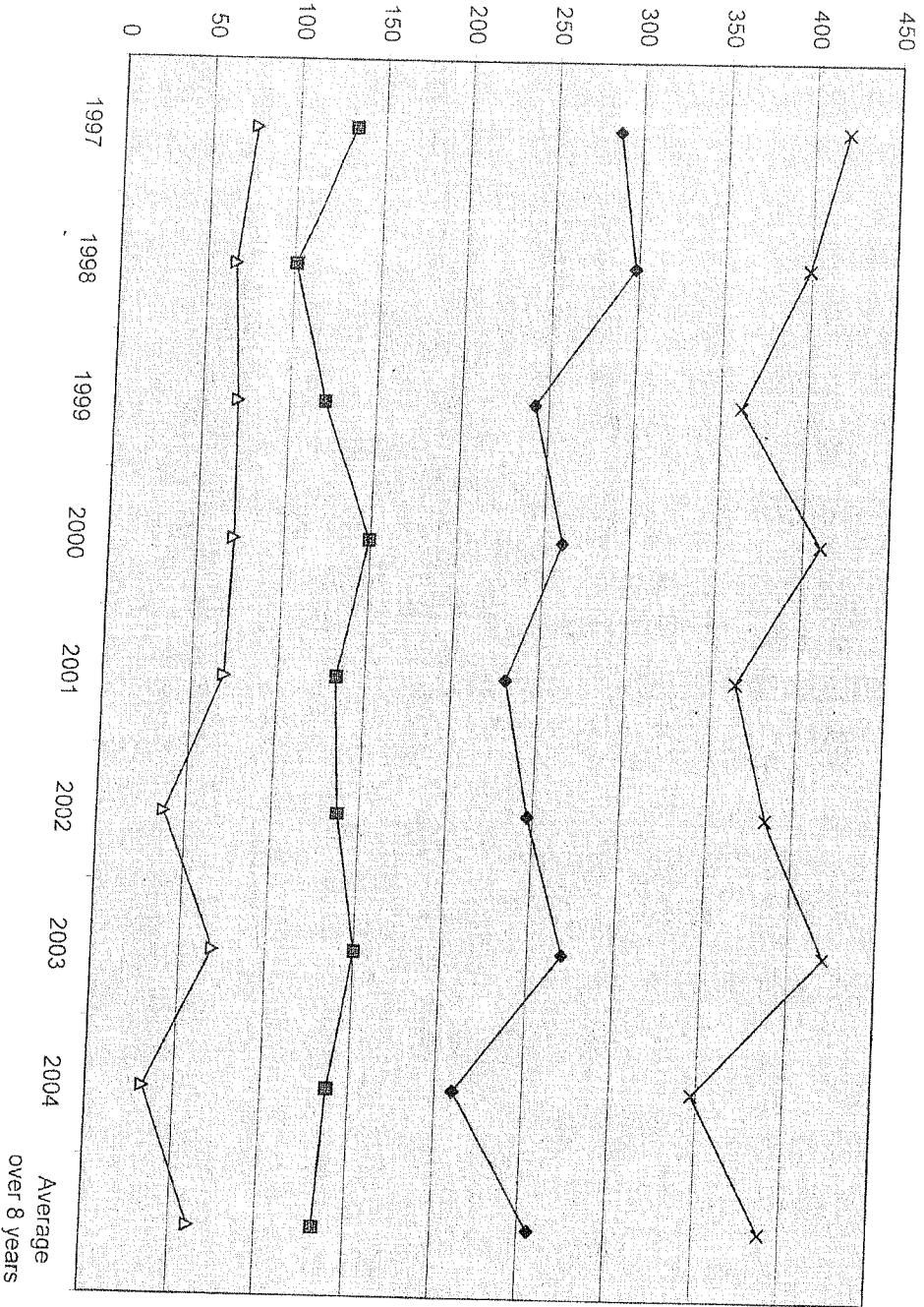
Charter for the Bereaved continued

- Regulations should be flexible, allowing for artistic use of wood or stone and artificial materials. This will widen choice and give the bereaved control over cost and design.
 - Charter members will appreciate that colloquial terms such as "mum" and "dad" and nicknames are appropriate for inscriptions. Bureaucratic regulations will not be applied.
 - Charter members will oppose the selling of a memorial as part of, or immediately after a funeral. The bereaved make a more meaningful purchase after they recover from the initial distress of the funeral.
- Baby and infant graves*
- Burial facilities should be developed to accommodate fetal remains, stillbirths and infants from local midwifery and gynaecology services. These facilities will allow for an individual grave and burial and the placing of a memorial, teddy bears, etc.
 - The graves should be on specific purpose-designed sections ie. Babies Memorial Garden.
 - Charter members will liaise with charities and support groups about the needs of bereaved parents.
 - Parents who wish to use an alternative to the standard coffin should be supported.
- Burials in private land*
- Charter members will consider providing a "green" burial scheme eg. woodland burial, as an alternative option to burial in private land.
- Cremation procedure*
- Charter members will develop service standards and arrange annual memorial services. They will also promote a reduction in the medical certificates for cremation, to reduce costs to the bereaved.
- Cremated remains and memorialisation*
- Charter members accept the benefits memorials can offer to the grieving process and will provide at least one type of inscribed memorial eg. plaque.
- Ceremonies and belief*
- Charter members will develop and manage facilities for use in a multi-cultural society without the permanent placement of religious symbols.
 - Charter members recognise that each ceremony is an highly individual and important occasion and will allocate a minimum 30 minutes for each service.
- Coffins and alternatives*
- Charter members will promote greater choice and will offer advice over coffins, containers and shrouds. A diagram showing the construction of a simple home made coffin will be provided.
- Communication*
- Charter members will improve education on bereavement. They will promote research into attitudes about death and the satisfaction levels related to funerals.



- Dignity, death and you* ■ Charter members will promote the value of a Will and funeral directives to ensure that every person obtains a funeral in accordance with their wishes.
- Environmental issues* ■ Charter members will improve the natural environment of cemetery and crematorium grounds, to encourage wildlife and use nature as an integral part of the bereavement experience.
- Charter members will promote research into issues which waste resources or may cause pollution or global warming, eg. gas usage for cremation, chipboard and plastics in coffins, embalming fluid, grass mowing, horticultural chemicals, etc.
- Social and community aspects* ■ Charter members will meet representatives of their community to identify the needs and wants of every individual. Individual needs should be met where this does not impinge upon the majority.
- Charter members will be receptive to suggestions that challenge conventions in order to improve choice and service delivery.
- Charter members will oppose the creation of monopolies within the funeral industry, eg. the sale of crematoria to companies with funeral directing interests.
- Funerals without a Funeral Director (independent funerals)* ■ Charter members should offer more advice about the supply of coffins, as these can be difficult to obtain in most areas. The bereaved should be able to obtain at least a standard veneered chipboard coffin or a bio-degradable type prior to a funeral.
- Charter members should consider whether new funeral options can be offered to the bereaved, which reduces costs and the monopoly control of funeral directors, eg. transferring the deceased directly to the crematorium to avoid the use of a hearse and limousines.
- Maintenance of grounds and gravedigging* ■ Charter members will develop minimum national standards of maintenance.
- Regulations* ■ Charter members will develop a standard list of regulations for use throughout the U.K.
- Staff and expertise* ■ Charter members will promote the employment of qualified staff in senior posts, eg. possession of the Diploma of the Institute of Burial and Cremation Administration.
- Charter members will support the employment of members of all ethnic groups, particularly where the community served is composed of various groups.
- Inspection* ■ Charter members will develop greater community awareness of cremation and burial facilities, in order to reduce ignorance. Malicious, misinformed comment can upset the bereaved and leave them feeling uneasy about the service.

Burial Data on an annual basis
 [Nb. Year runs from January to December]



Burial data for past 8 years in graph form

- ◆ Coffin Burials
- Cremated Remains
- △ Chapel
- × Coffins & Cremated Remains

Appendix 3

Cemetery Statistics - 2003

1st quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	0	1	0	1
Sc	22	8	4	30
Sk	15	6	9	21
To	20	18	5	38
Ha	12	0	3	12
Ca	5	2	0	7
Mo	0	1	0	1
Total	74	36	21	110

2nd quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	1	3	0	4
Sc	24	16	10	40
Sk	13	2	5	15
To	29	9	8	38
Ha	8	0	1	8
Ca	3	4	0	7
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	78	34	24	112

3rd quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	2	2	0	4
Sc	17	15	6	32
Sk	4	5	2	9
To	14	13	5	27
Ha	5	2	0	7
Ca	5	10	0	15
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	47	47	13	94

4th quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	3	1	0	5
Sc	18	11	1	29
Sk	12	4	2	16
To	26	10	6	36
Ha	9	3	2	12
Ca	3	3	0	6
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	71	33	11	104

Total per annum				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
	270	150	69	420

Cemetery Statistics - 2004

1st quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	2	1	0	3
Sc	20	10	2	30
Sk	7	10	3	17
To	17	11	2	28
Ha	6	3	2	9
Ca	7	9	0	16
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	59	44	9	103

2nd quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	0	4	0	4
Sc	15	11	1	26
Sk	4	2	1	6
To	18	10	0	28
Ha	8	3	1	11
Ca	4	1	0	5
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	49	31	3	80

3rd quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	1	5	0	6
Sc	9	6	1	15
Sk	9	2	1	11
To	18	8	0	26
Ha	13	2	7	15
Ca	6	3	0	9
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	56	26	9	82

4th quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	1	4	0	5
Sc	9	12	7	21
Sk	11	3	2	14
To	16	12	0	28
Ha	5	2	2	7
Ca	4	2	0	6
Mo	0	1	0	1
Total	46	36	11	82

Total per annum				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
	210	137	32	347

Cemetery Statistics - 2005

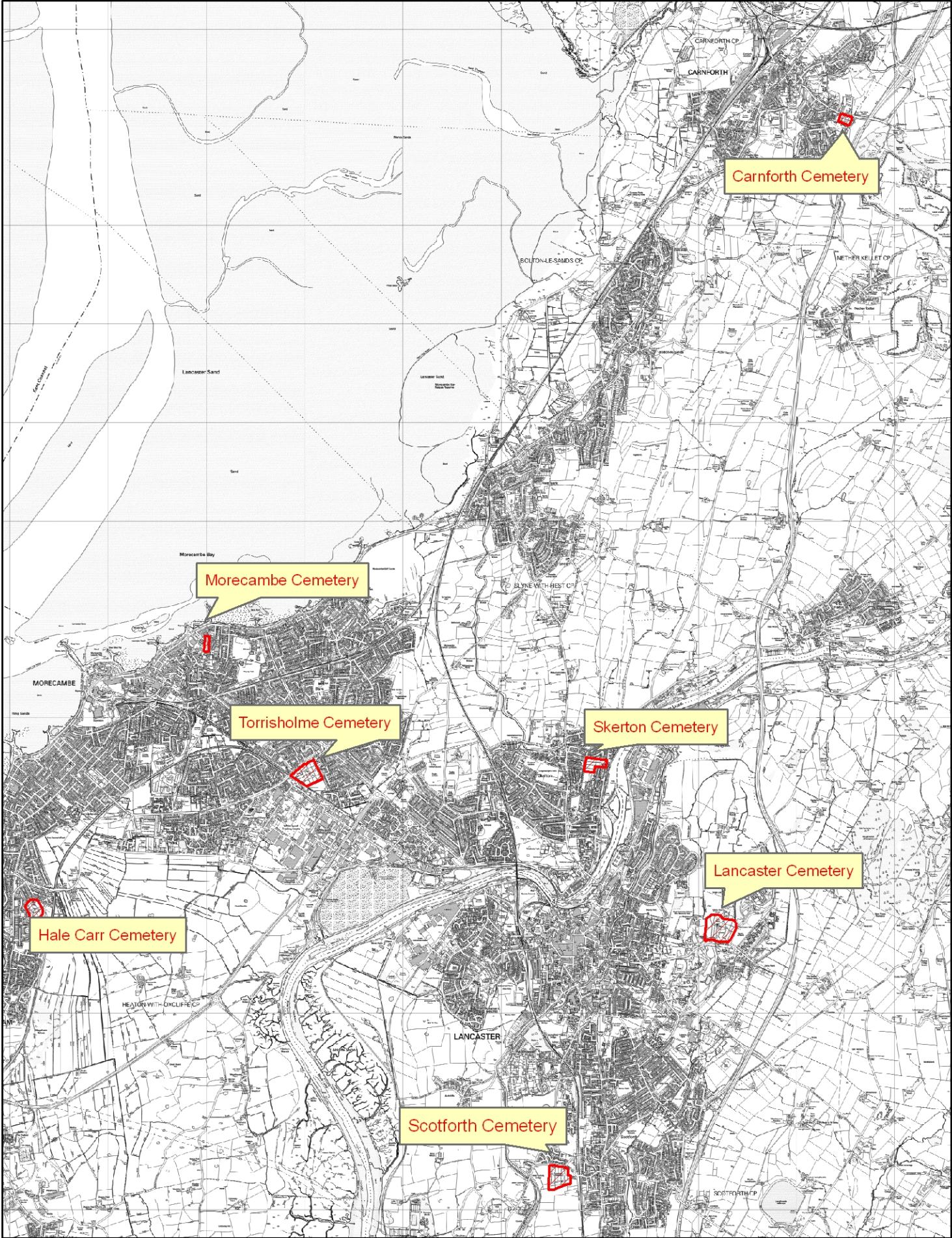
1st quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	1	1	0	2
Sc	28	12	8	40
Sk	9	3	5	12
To	26	9	0	35
Ha	6	2	3	8
Ca	5	4	0	9
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	75	31	16	106

2nd quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	0	1	0	1
Sc	16	13	4	29
Sk	11	3	2	14
To	17	14	0	31
Ha	9	1	2	10
Ca	6	6	0	12
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	59	38	8	97

3rd quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	0	2	0	2
Sc	14	9	4	23
Sk	14	4	5	18
To	13	14	0	27
Ha	4	3	1	7
Ca	2	6	0	8
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	47	38	10	85

4th quarter				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
La	1	6	0	7
Sc	17	12	6	29
Sk	1	4	0	5
To	16	9	0	25
Ha	8	0	4	8
Ca	5	3	0	8
Mo	0	0	0	0
Total	48	34	10	82

Total per annum				
	Interments	ashes	chapel	Total burials
	229	141	44	370





Commonwealth War Graves Commission

UNITED KINGDOM AREA

Jenton Road, Sydenham, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV31 1XS

Telephone - (01926) 330137

E-Mail - director@cwgc.org

Facsimile - (01926) 456595

Web Site - www.cwgc.org

C Linehan
Cemeteries Department
Lancaster City Council
Morcambe Town Hall
Morcambe
Lancashire
LA4 5AF

Our ref 1946

27 June 2005

Dear sir

TORISHOLME CEMETERY, LANCASHIRE HORTICULTURAL MAINTENANCE OF WAR GRAVE PLOT

I spoke to Paul Cocker last week and he referred me to you regarding the care of the war graves plot. We have noted that the maintenance carried out on our behalf as per the agreed specification does not consistently reach the required standard.

Our aim is to maintain the graves plot to the specification and provide an appearance that is consistent. With this in mind I am writing to ask if Lancaster City Council would consider allowing me to maintain the war graves plot using our own contractor with all costs being met by ourselves.

Your views on the current maintenance of the plot and the best way forward to improving it would be appreciated. Please contact me on 07734 445013 to discuss this matter in greater detail.

Yours sincerely

Steve Lomas
District Inspector

E.H.O.	
MORECAMBE	
27 JUN 2005	
ACK	CL
FILE	

Extracts from 'The Graveyard Shift'

**Reported by Gayle Rouncivell and published in the Lancaster Guardian,
February 3rd, 2006**

Dr Denis de Vitre (1806-1878)

"Dr Denis de Vitre was born near Carlisle in 1806... After qualifying as a doctor he started practice in Dumfrieshire, settling in Lancaster in 1832 where he became consulting physician to the Lancaster asylum. He wrote many papers on 'observations on the necessity of an extended legislative protection to patients of unsound mind'. It was at this time, along with the superintendent Mr Gaskell, the new humane treatment of the insane was introduced into the asylum. Dr de Vitre was actively engaged in the promotion of the Royal Albert Institution and was mayor of Lancaster in 1843/44 and 1855/56, as well as being a borough and county JP... Dr de Vitre died in 1878 at the age of 73 at his home, The Elms in Bare. De Vitre Street and De Vitre Cottages in Lancaster are named after him."

Henry Coulston (1862-1924)

"Born in 1862, Henry Joseph Coulston succeeded estates under his great uncle's will in 1901 and took up residence at Hawkshead in Bolton-le-Sands. He was admitted to the Bar in 1884, and two years later married Mary Hodgson of Grange-over-Sands. Coulston was an extensive landowner... He became a county magistrate in 1896, and was elected onto Lancaster Rural District Council in 1892, becoming the oldest member and serving as chairman of the highways committee from 1901. He was elected to the county council in 1903 and became alderman of the county in 1916... He died in 1924 at the age of 62."

Sir Ernest Wingate-Saul (1873 – 1944)

" Sir Ernest Wingate-Saul was born in 1873. He was Recorder of Preston from 1921 until 1928, and Judge of Appeal in the Isle of Man from 1925 until 1928. He was also Umpire under the Unemployment Insurance Act between 1928 and 1944. He died in 1944 and Wingate-Saul Road in Fairfield, Lancaster is named after him."

Sir Thomas Storey (1825-1898) (Founder of Storey Institute)

"...he worked on the railways in the Midlands, returning north to live in Lancaster in 1847 to work for the regional railways... he joined his brother William in the manufacture of table blaize (1851). In 1856 the firm took a site at White Cross Mill... Outside his business concerns, storey became a member of Lancaster Town Council, and was mayor four times. His interests in other public work meant he was also elected a Port commissioner in 1863, and was also actively involved in the Lancaster Charity Trust, on the management board at Ripley Hospital and appointed a county magistrate... Storey was High Sheriff of the County Palatine in 1893/94 and received his knighthood in 1887."

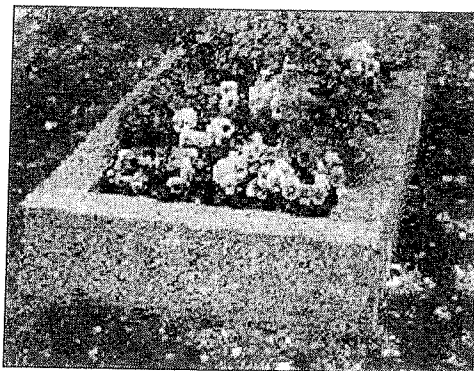
Lord Ashton (1842-1930)

"James Williamson was born in 1842 in Lancaster... educated at Lancaster Royal Grammar School and at a private school in Cheshire. He then entered the family business, assuming control in 1875 and quickly expanding the firm, which was based on linoleum. Williamson was the first to see the potential of the mass-production of linoleum as a cheap, effective floor covering, and the business rapidly became the largest of its type in Britain, with important overseas interests. The Lune Mills factory in Lancaster grew to employ more than 4000 workers. Williamson used some of his wealth on building landmarks in the city. He developed the park donated by his father and provided an imposing neo-Georgian town hall in 1909. His best-remembered gift was the impressive domed Ashton Hall Memorial built in the park which also took his name. In all, Williamson donated more than £500,000 to Lancaster. Williamson also served on Lancaster Town Council from 1871 to 1880 and was MP for the Lancaster division of North Lancashire from 1886 to 1895, when he retired to accept a peerage. He became High Sheriff of the County Palatine in 1885 and Constable Castle in 1921. Williamson died intestate in on May 27, 1930 at his Rylelands home, leaving a fortune of £9.5 million, the largest intestate legacy in British history at that time."

Cemeteries and Crematoria Service

Private Grave Maintenance Service

Grave owners can arrange for the Council to carry out grave maintenance on their behalf. The maintenance consists of planting the grave either at the headstone area or the length of the



grave depending on the type of grave. Planting is carried out twice a year with spring and summer bedding and the grave is kept weed free and generally tidy. Grave owners can request only one planting at half the normal price. For costs, see Cemetery Fees and Charges.

For further information, please contact the Cemeteries Section by e-mail at parks&openspaces@bexley.gov.uk or by telephone on 01322 356813.

Private Grave Maintenance Scheme

Service	Cost
Full Memorial Grave Plot (Annual Charge)	£75 (£37.50 half-year)
Headstone only Grave Plot (Annual Charge)	£30 (£15 half-year)
Turfing of Full Memorial Grave Plot	£25
Soiling of Full Memorial Grave Plot	£15
Timber Surround for Full Grave at Hillview Cemetery	£60 (£35 if timber supplied by resident)
Weed Area and Tidy/ Level Chippings	£45

**SOME NOTES ON PROMSSION BY COUNCILLOR DAVID KERR – CHAIRMAN
OF THE CEMETERIES TASK GROUP**

As the Chairman of Cemeteries Task Group I attended a seminar with Cllr J Pritchard, Cabinet Member, to look at a new concept to rethink how we deal with the more sensitive side of burials. This new process was being referred to as Promession, a new idea being introduced to the UK by Susanne Wiigh-Masak, a biologist from Sweden. For over 900 years we have continued a tradition without change. At the present time we can only offer burial and cremation BUT perhaps there may be a third Way, a more environmentally friendly way, Promession.

Promession is a creative and unique approach being developed by Sweden's Susanne Wiigh-Masak, who recently received Gold in this year's prestigious Green Apple awards for Environmental Best Practice. The Award was in recognition of her work in finding an ecological alternative to burial and cremation.

Promession is a way of taking care of human remains with highest dignity in order to make mulching possible. "The original plan" for a human body was to fall to the ground, where animals and microorganisms would help break it down. In a civilised world this is not possible and through history we made the treatment of dead bodies very complicated. No wonder, because we are one of the big mammals and not very easy to handle. Technical developments today finally provide us with a method that is allowing us to do something that is as close to the "original plan" as possible.

Many consider this method appealing, because we can understand what is happening with the body when it is buried shallowly as a dried powder in a biodegradable coffin.

Promession is not only a biological approach to the environment it is also an economic approach to nature. From the day we are conceived until the day we stop eating and drinking, all organic matter from which we build our body originates from the soil. When we burn our body or when we bury it 6 feet under we neglect the huge possibility to present our organic remains back to the economical balance of nature and to become part of the process of decomposition as nature prefers it. Through Promession it is possible to mulch the organic remains in order for it to become healthy soil that is a pre-request for new life.

You can understand that death is a possibility for new life in the same way as the leaves from a tree in autumn time give new flowers a possibility to grow in springtime. If we put a plant on top of the grave it will be a symbol of the body, and we realise that we are built from the same constituents as the rest of nature and that we definitely are part of the circle of life. When we feel ourselves related to the circle of life it is easier to understand why we also should take an interest in environmental questions and be as careful and responsible as we can.

The method behind Promession is crystal-clear, easy to grasp and accept. It is based on a new combination of tried-and-tested techniques that prepare the corpse for a natural process of decomposition. The procedure is justifiable in terms of ethical, moral, environmental and technical considerations, and does not subject the body to violent or destructive handling.

"The method is based upon preserving the body in a biological form after death. Then it can be returned to the ecological cycle in a dignified manner as a valuable

contribution to the living earth," explains Susanne Wiigh-Mäsak, biologist and head of operations at Promessa Organic AB.

An important part of the solution is to remove that which is least important; the water that makes up 70 percent of a normal-sized body. Technically speaking, this is done using an entirely closed individual process in which the corpse is freeze-dried in [liquid nitrogen](#). This makes the body very brittle, and vibration of specific amplitude transforms it into an organic powder that is then introduced into a vacuum chamber where the water is evaporated away.

The now dry powder then passes through a metal separator where any surgical spare parts and mercury are removed. In a similar way, the powder can be disinfected if required. The remains are now ready to be laid in a biodegradable (mulch able) coffin. There is no hurry with the burial itself. The organic powder, which is hygienic and odourless, does not decompose when kept dry. The burial takes place in a shallow grave in living soil that turns the coffin and its contents into compost in about 6-12 months time. In conjunction with the burial and in accordance with the wishes of the deceased or next of kin, a bush or tree can be planted above the coffin. The compost formed can then be taken up by the plant, which can instil greater insight in and respect for the ecological cycle, of which every living thing is a part. The plant stands as a symbol of the person, and we understand where the body went.

"Promession reduces environmental impact on some of our most important resources; our water, air and soil," says Susanne Wiigh-Mäsak. "At the same time it provides us with deeper insights regarding the ecological cycle, and greater understanding of and respect for life on earth."

There will not necessarily be a difference in the format used for cremation in the funeral service. The coffin will be placed on a catafalque at the "Promatorium" and remain there until the committal has been said and the bereaved have left the building. The coffin will then be removed into a chamber where the body will be frozen to -18 degrees Celsius, in an ordinary mechanical freezer. This will take between 24 and 48 hours.

Once the body has been cooled to -18 degrees Celsius, it is ready to be placed on to a moving platform that will transport the coffin through the different stages of the process, this part of the process takes place within a sealed unit, the Promator.

Stage 1

The coffin is first weighed, to determine how much liquid nitrogen will be required to freeze the body to -196 degrees Celsius, the calculation will be carried out automatically by specially designed weighing machines, and based on 1kg liquid nitrogen per 1kg of body weight. This cooling process will take 2 hours, and the liquid nitrogen will meanwhile evaporate into the atmosphere (where it originally came from), in its natural gas form of nitrogen.

Stage 2

Once the body has reached -196 it will be mechanically transported onto a belt which will give off small, 5 millimetres, vibrations. This part of the process takes approx. 60 seconds.

Stage 3

The powder will then move into a vacuum chamber where clean water will evaporate and be dispersed into the atmosphere as natural steam.

Stage 4

The dry powder passes through electrical currents which will extract any metals that exist. The metals will be placed in a container ready to be recycled.

Stage 5

The dry powder residue, which will weigh approximately one third of the original body weight, will within the sealed unit be placed into a bio-degradable coffin (1 metre square by area and 0,2 metre high).

Incorporated into the coffin will be an iron-net that will rust away, which is a natural mineral found in soil and is not harmful to the environment. This will protect the remains from disturbance by animals etc.

Stage 6

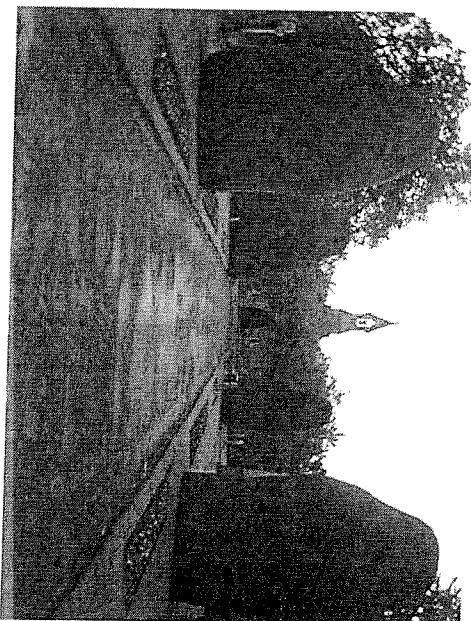
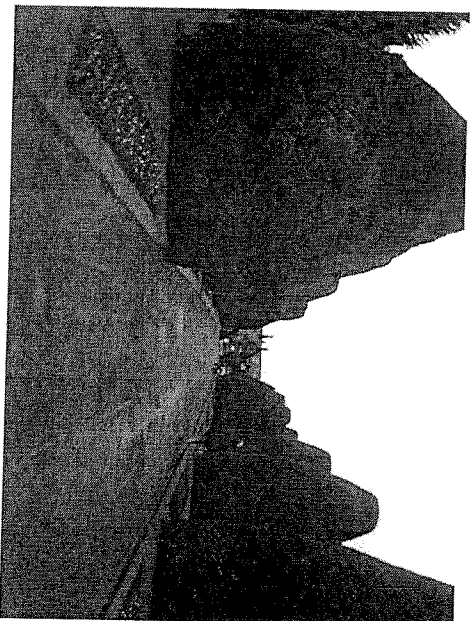
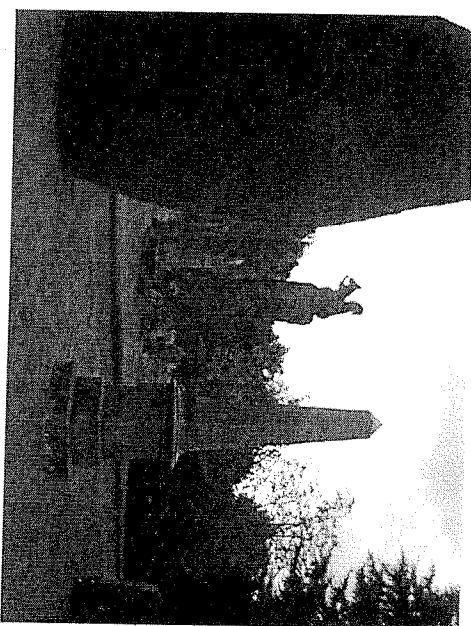
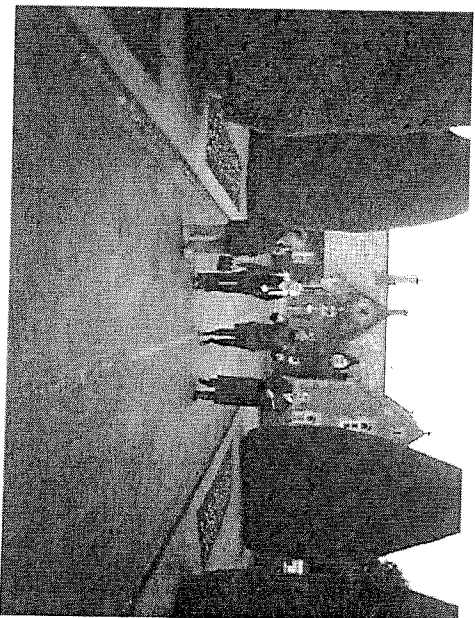
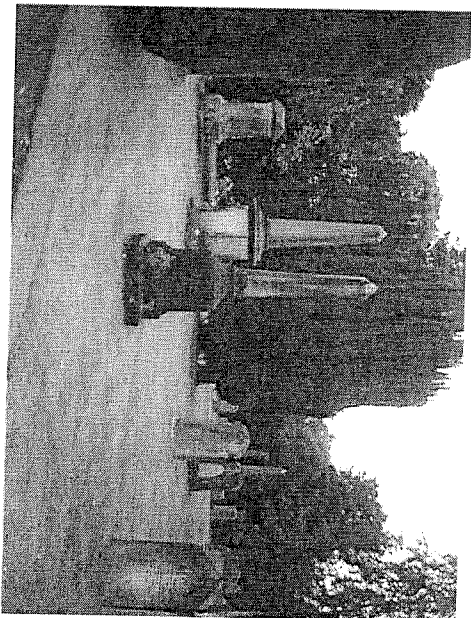
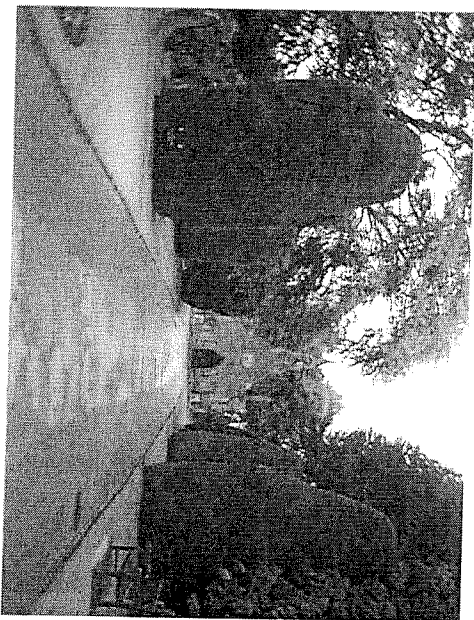
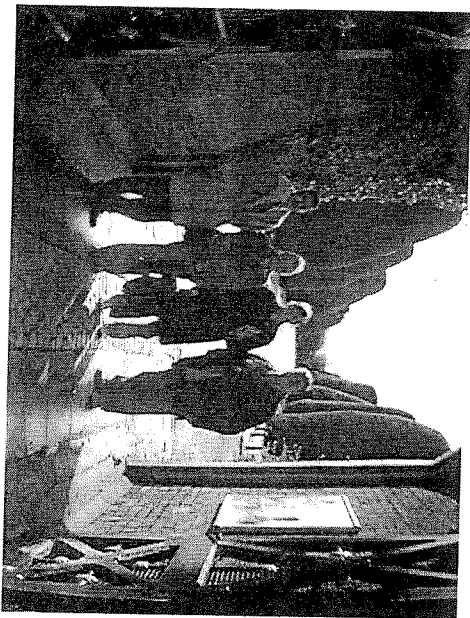
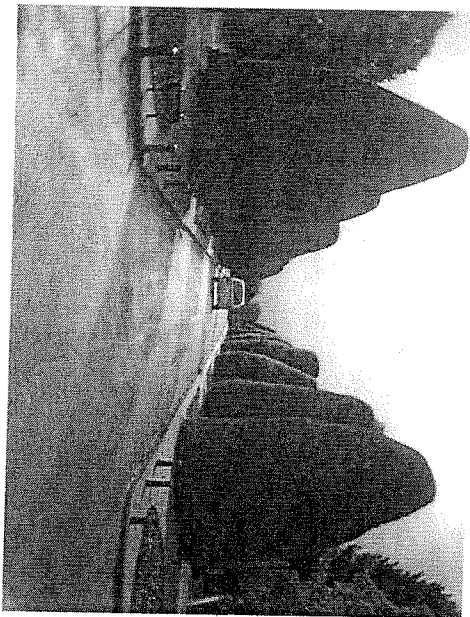
The coffin will be buried to a depth of approximately half a metre. In approximately 6 to 12 months the remains and the coffin will have become part of the life giving nutrients of the soil. It is suggested that a plant or tree be placed on the grave to feed on the nutrients and become a symbol of the person or just a possibility for new life.

Alternatively it will be possible for the promains (the organic metal free dry powder) to be cremated in a smaller incinerator / furnace, if to be ashes and scattered or buried in a biodegradable urn.

This is an ecological alternative to cremation or burial. The corpse is frozen in liquid nitrogen and then shattered into powder by ultrasonic vibration before being buried in a biodegradeable box in a shallow grave. Green campaigners believe the technique could ease the crowding in graveyards and the increasingly harmful emissions from cremations.

The inventor, the Swedish biologist Susanne Wiigh-Masak, claims that the process is good for the environment because the powder (which is essentially compost) breaks down in the soil more thoroughly and quickly than by conventional burial. She suggests that relatives plant a tree or bush above the grave as a long-term memorial. The first promatorium is to be opened in Sweden in 2006. Local authorities in the UK and elsewhere have also shown interest in the technique, to the extent that the Crewe & Nantwich Borough Council has issued [guidelines](#) for carrying out a promession. Ms Wiigh-Masak created promession from Italian promissione, to swear to the truth. The place where the funeral is held and the process takes place has been named promatorium, a blend of promession and crematorium. The resulting powder is called promains, by analogy with the US term cremains for the ashes of a cremated person, itself a blend created from cremation remains.

A town in Sweden plans to become the first place in the world where corpses will be disposed of by freeze-drying, as an environmentally friendly alternative to cremation or burial. Jonkoping, in southern Sweden, is to turn its crematorium into a so-called promatorium next year. Of course we are in the early stages of discovering the possibilities of such ideas, with a view to further scrutiny when Nantwich Borough Council proceed with plans to be the first district to welcome and install the very first promatorium device within England.



Site Visit to Layton Cemetery - Blackpool

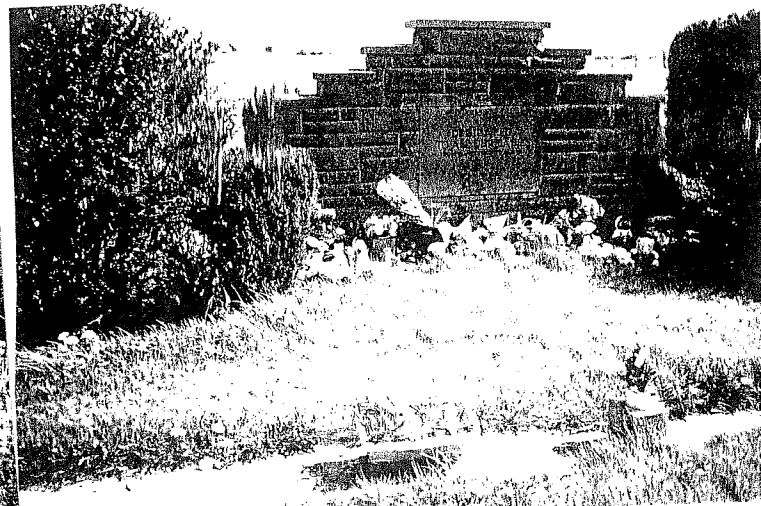
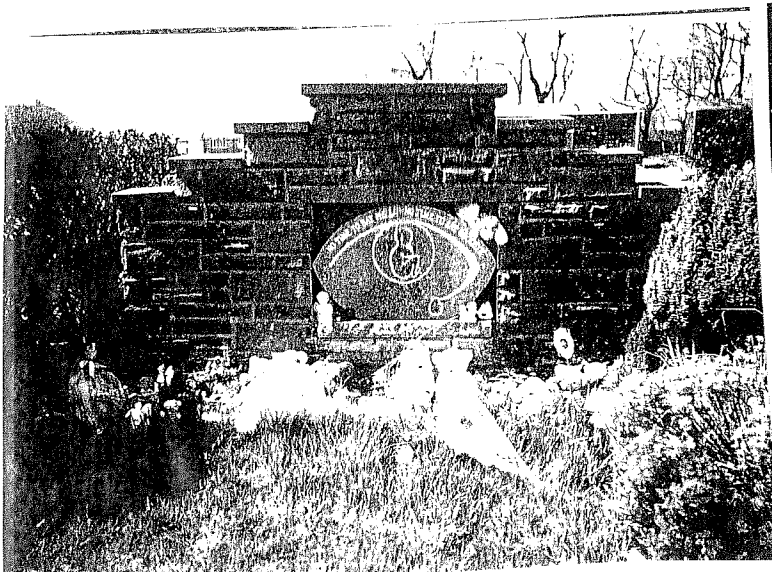
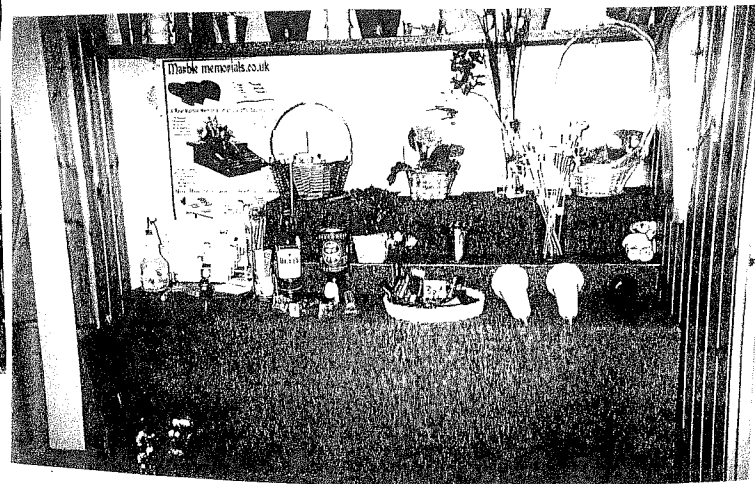


**Task Group Members
At Layton Cemetery**

Site Visit to Carleton Cemetery – Blackpool

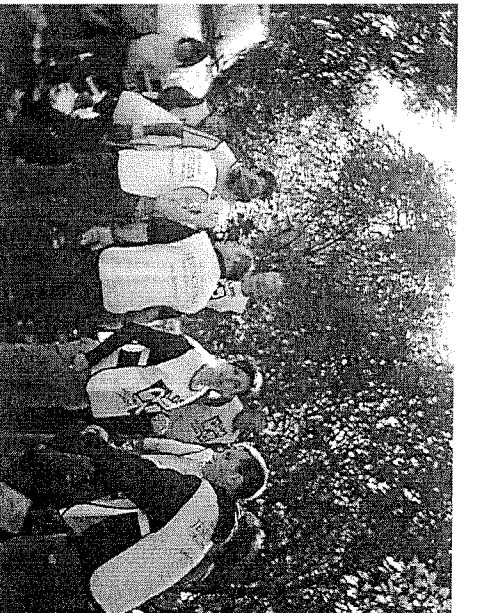
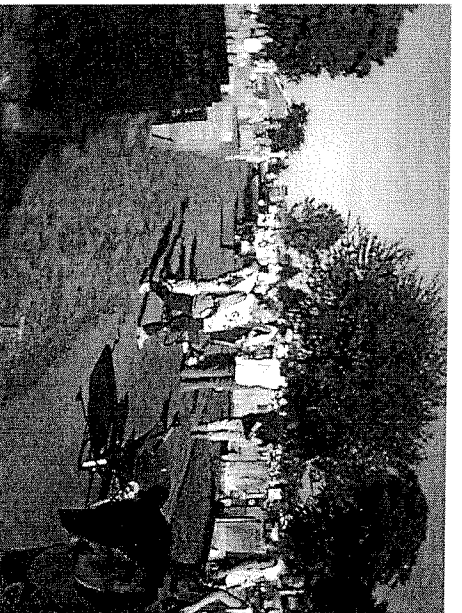
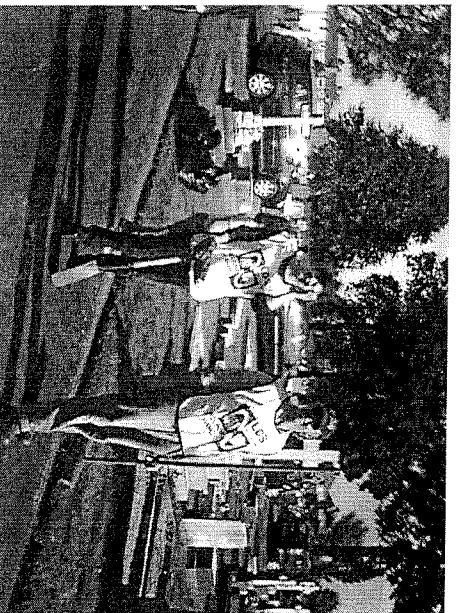
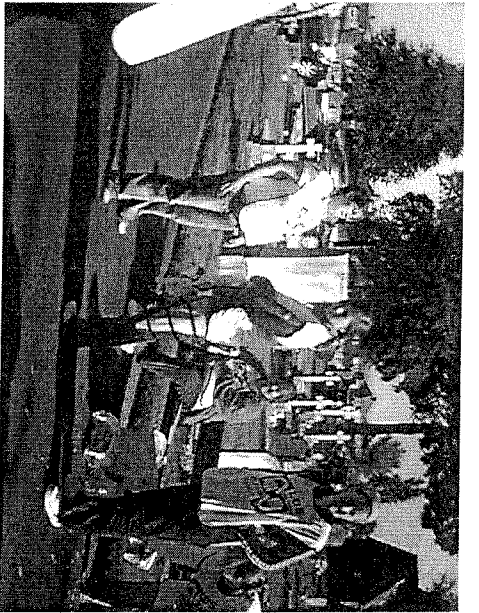
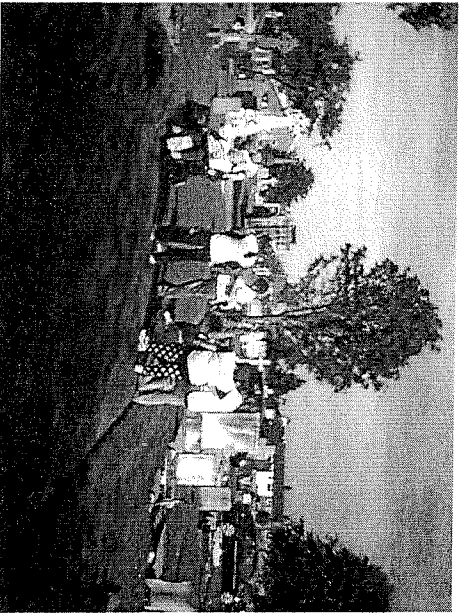
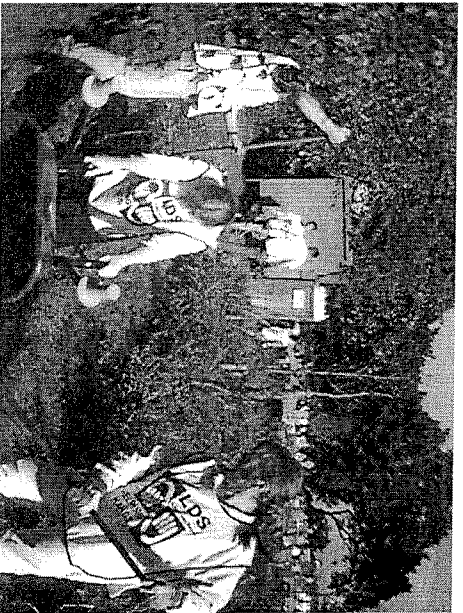
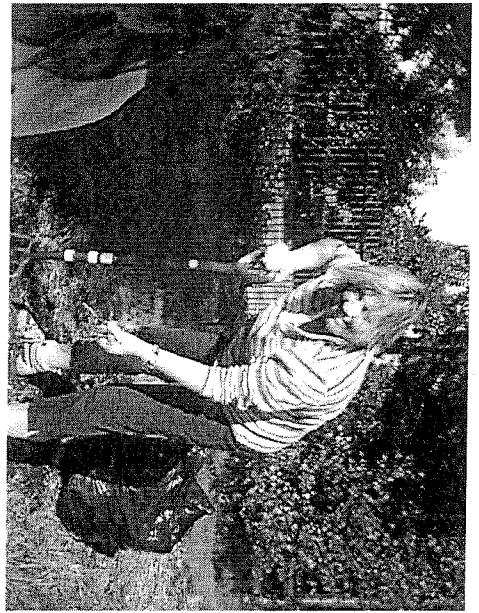
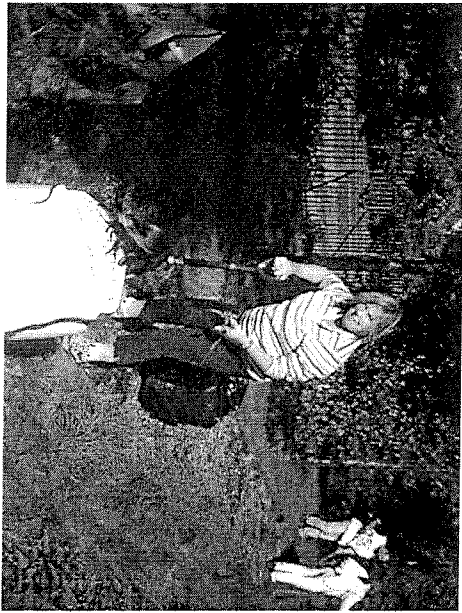
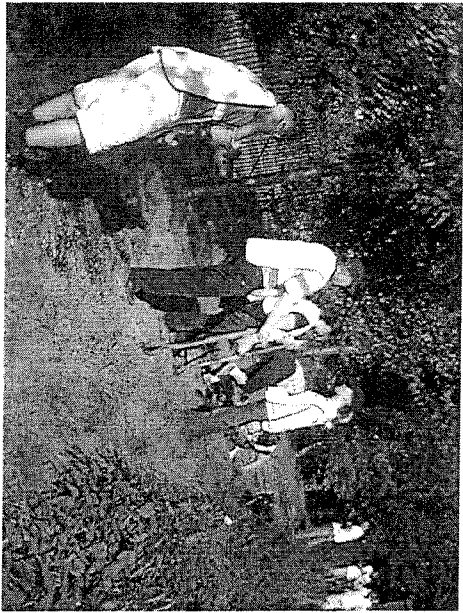


**The Tea Room and Florist
Within Carleton Cemetery**



**Dedicated 'Baby' Section
At Carleton Cemetery**

Appendix 11



Cabinet considered a report upon the findings of the Cemeteries Task Group, which sought the agreement of Cabinet to the recommendations as set out in the report.

Members considered each individual recommendation of the Task Group. Members then voted as follows.

Resolved unanimously:

- (1) That Cabinet adopts the Charter for the Bereaved, subject to costs being kept within existing Budgets (Task Group Recommendation 4 refers).
- (2) That a further report be provided to Cabinet on the financial implications and timing of the Task Group Recommendations 9 (a), (b).
- (3) That Cabinet accepts Task Group Recommendations 10 (a) and (b), that no action be taken for the securing of the Council's cemeteries over-night (c), that Torrisholme Chapel be put back into operation (d) and that the occupation of Torrisholme Lodge should help to improve security.
- (4) That with regard to Task Group Recommendation 11 Cabinet approves the formal establishment of a Friends Group at Hale Carr and that other Groups be encouraged if the pilot is successful.
- (5) That with regard to Task Group Recommendation 12 Cabinet approves the retention of Torrisholme Lodge as part of the Council Housing stock, but subject to a sensitive letting.
- (6) That with regard to Task Group Recommendation 13 Cabinet approves the recommendations in order to improve the woodland burial areas.
- (7) That with regard to Task Group Recommendation 14 Cabinet notes (a), notes that (b) is unlikely to have a business case, awaits a response on (c) and that a visit of Lancaster Cemetery by Cabinet Members be arranged.
- (8) That with regard to Task Group Recommendation 7 (b) that Officers write to the owners of Lancaster Cemetery Lodge requesting that the OCNW sign be either moved or made more discreet.
- (9) That the Budget issues and resource implications relating to the report be brought forward as proposals in the 2007/8 Budget round.

Officers responsible for effecting the decision:

Corporate Director (Community Services).
Corporate Director (Finance and Performance).

Reason for making the decision:

The decision is in accordance with the recommendations of the Task Group. Each recommendation will be scoped and developed further with all relevant services consulted as to what can be realistically achieved within resources that are available.