

ELLISFIELD VOLUNTEER GROUP

BURIAL GROUND INSTRUCTIONS AND RISK ASSESSMENT

If in doubt - ASK!

Introduction

This document combines the scope of what is required to keep the Burial Ground in good order, together with details of what is required to minimise the level of risk to all volunteers (and public).

The contents might seem, at first glance, to be “over the top” for what essentially are tasks that many of us regularly perform in our own gardens. However, consider how many thousands of injuries happen in private gardens across the country when there is just one person working alone and in totally familiar territory. At the Burial Ground, there can be up to four or five volunteers who are unused to working together, some perhaps who have never worked at the Burial Ground before. There is also the extra risk of other residents and/or visitors appearing without warning, possibly without understanding the dangers of approaching someone strimming or mowing.

Please read this document thoroughly before you start work. For further information talk it through with the EVG Area Contact. See EVG website for further details – www.ellisfield.org.uk/evg.html

Instruction Summary:

The Parish Burial Ground’s boundary is the top of the grass bank (which is to your right when facing the church entrance). Normally, volunteers will drive up the (right-of-way) track and park at the Burial Ground’s side entrance.

Mowers, strimmer, rake, petrol, warning signs, wheelbarrow, first aid kit, etc. are stored together in The Old Manor garage. A key is provided for the garage padlock (if already unlocked, leave it that way) and you are requested to be very vigilant in keeping the storage location and equipment secure.

Other gardening equipment belonging to The Old Manor is also stored in the garage and it’s important the EVG’s equipment is kept up against the left hand wall in a neat and tidy fashion.

Four separate tasks are required, as follows:

Strimming Around graves
 Around the perimeter fencing

Strimming should only be done where a mower cannot reach. This would usually be immediately around individual graves (say, 6 to 9 inches), unless the gap between graves is too narrow for the mower. It would also include the area within 6 to 9 inches of the perimeter fencing. Grass cuttings are to be either collected or raked into the open areas for collection by a pick-up mower.

Mowing Basically, all open areas of grass are to be mowed including, where possible, between individual graves.

Raking The strimmed grass away from around and between graves
 The strimmed grass away from the perimeter fencing

If the mower being used does not pick up cuttings, all cuttings will need to be raked and collected by hand

Grass Cuttings To be deposited on the heap created by the wooden pallets alongside the (right of way) track

Barrowing Taking grass cuttings for depositing
A lot of time can be saved by the volunteer bringing the barrow to the mower. However, great care must be taken and the mower must not be approached until it has been switched off.

Risk Assessment

General Setup

1. No work to start prior to reassessment of objectives and safety discussion.
2. It is recommended that volunteers always carry a **mobile phone** for emergencies.
3. The “**Keep Out**” signs must be placed at the top of the grass slope and at the top of the steps.
4. The **First Aid box** must be placed by the side of the gate.
5. All volunteers must be aware of changing weather conditions. The principal risks are:
 - a. Sunburn / sunstroke: Wear clothing that covers arms, body and legs. Wear a hat. Use sunscreen or suntan lotion to minimise the sun's effects.
 - b. Dehydration: Bring water or soft drinks with you.
 - c. Rain: Bring suitable clothing with you. If there is any danger of slipping or injury from tools, work must stop.
6. For the sake of safety, all volunteers must continuously act as “lookouts”, so that possible risks can be spotted and, hopefully, avoided. If there are sufficient volunteers, one or more volunteers can be given this task as their sole job but this does not mean that the other volunteers should not keep alert to potential problems!
7. Avoid working backwards. If you must then check regularly what’s behind you! This is **very important** because of the uneven ground, grave stones and flower containers.

Common to Strimming and Mowing

1. Strimming/mowing can only be performed by those volunteers who have been formally trained with petrol driven trimmers/mowers and/or who are personally known to be experienced
2. All strimming and mowing must **STOP IMMEDIATELY** if “visitors” (ie, non-Volunteers) enter the site or if a danger is spotted (e.g volunteer being hit by a flying stone from a strimmer or mower). Strimming and mowing can only recommence when the task leader gives “the OK”.
3. Refilling. All petrol cans must be stored and refilled at the pedestrian gate out of direct sun light, away from the main pathway to avoid any possibility of someone tripping over them! All cans must be properly sealed when not being used.
4. Please note that the Ellisfield Volunteer Group’s current insurance for *Use of Power Driven Machinery* only covers volunteers between 18 and 80 years of age.
5. The Strimmer/mower operator **MUST**:
 - a. Undertake their own Risk Assessment of the site and clear away any stones and twigs prior to undertaking work.
 - b. Be experienced in the type of machine being used. If unsure of any aspect of use, ask for advice or refer to the Operator Manual before using the machine.
 - c. Carry out a full safety check on the machine prior to use and during work at convenient intervals. If faulty or damaged, the machine should be fully repaired or not used.
 - d. Work in such a way that, as far as possible, any possible risk to themselves or others is minimised.
 - e. Keep alert to possible dangers (ie, look up regularly!).

Strimming

Strimming is a potentially hazardous activity, especially when other volunteers are close by!

It is important to stress that even those who have used trimmers for many years in their own garden may be unaware of the dangers from flying stones to people who can be more than 30 to 40 feet away.

Strimming around graves can be especially dangerous, mainly because the primary angle of throw changes as the operator works their way around a grave.

If at all possible, the Burial Ground should be trimmed when there are as few volunteers around as possible.

The trimmer operator **MUST** wear eye protection and recommended to wear:

- a. Ear protection, preferably full ear “muffs”.
- b. Solid boots, preferably steel toe capped.
- c. Gloves.
- d. Trousers or overalls, preferably thick.
- e. Full harness or shoulder strap, to avoid muscle strain.

The trimmer operator **MUST**:

- a. Assign a suitable restricted work area in which other volunteers or public are not allowed.
- b. **NOT** use a brush cutting blade at the Burial Ground without prior discussion with the Task Leader.

Mowing

The primary hazard here is, of course, the rotating blades which can:

- a. Send stones and wood flying towards other people standing up to 20 to 30 feet away.
- b. Injury to finger if you try to clear a blockage without switching the mower off.
- c. Injury to toes if they get in the way of the blades.

The mower operator **MUST** wear solid boots, preferably steel toe capped. It is preferable to use ear protection and to wear gloves.

Take care not to bump into the stonework as it may loosen items over time. Strimming negates having to get too close to the stonework with the mower.

Raking

Although not hazardous in its own right, stay vigilant and keep a watch for volunteers mowing or strimming nearby.

Barrowing

This involves taking grass cuttings and depositing on the heap created by the wooden pallets alongside the (right of way) track

Before you use a wheelbarrow, make sure that the tyres are inflated, axle oiled and no signs of damage.

To avoid strains and back injury:

- a. Never overload the wheelbarrow.
- b. Maintain a straight back and push from the legs.
- c. Take care when tipping to ensure that you do not overbalance.
- d. If the wheelbarrow starts to topple do not try to save it. This can easily damage your back.