



## **Memorial Safety Inspection**

Since 1969, Billingshurst Parish Council has been responsible for the maintenance of the closed churchyard at St Mary's Church in Billingshurst. As the burial authority, the Parish Council has a general duty under Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 to maintain the burial ground in good order.

The Parish Council has reviewed its responsibilities for the closed churchyard following guidance from the Ministry of Justice on Managing the Safety of Burial Ground Memorials and a report from the Local Government Ombudsman on Memorial Safety in Local Authority Cemeteries. The Parish Council has organised a memorial safety inspection of the churchyard to be carried out during September 2009.

The inspection is being carried out by a company called Independent Memorial Inspections. Their staff will be recognisable in company uniform and will be working in the churchyard between the hours of 7am and 7pm Monday to Saturday.

The contractor will record the details of each memorial, the type of memorial and a visual inspection of its general condition, along with a photograph. Stability and pitch of the memorial will also be recorded. For memorials that fail the inspection, the failure will be recorded and the Parish Council alerted to enable them to endeavour to contact the memorial owner. In the event that urgent action is needed under health and safety regulations, the contractor may undertake one of the following procedures:

- Laying Flat: This will be achieved where possible by walking the memorial forward on to the grave and then laid backwards flat on the ground or the use of mechanical equipment for large memorials.
- Staked Vertical: This will be achieved by driving a stake into the ground behind the memorial and the stake then being strapped to the memorial. The stability of the memorial will be rechecked to ensure safety. Multiple stakes may be used
- Cordoned: If the memorial is too unsafe to carry out either of the two methods above then an area around the memorial will be fenced with pins and red/white tape or barrier fencing.

Please note the above procedures will only be carried out where absolutely necessary and efforts will be made to contact the memorial owner urgently. The Parish Council would be pleased to answer any questions about the memorial safety inspections on 01403 782555 or email: [council@billingshurst.gov.uk](mailto:council@billingshurst.gov.uk)