



Carrying out a monument and memorial condition survey

What to look for and what you will need

Recording is an essential first step in the repair and maintenance of burial monuments and memorials.

Planning your survey

- The owners of the cemetery must have given permission for the survey.
- Ensure that for each survey day you have a minimum of two people working together at all times.
- Surveys should only be carried out in daylight hours. Working at dusk or in poor light could be unsafe.
- If ladders and platforms are likely to be needed to inspect or clear monuments and memorials, you need to bring in professional conservators.
- Surveys will need to be programmed to not clash with funerals and burials.
- Survey and clearance work must not disturb nesting birds (March to August) or other wildlife.
- Although it might be tempting to try and record as many monuments as possible, accuracy is more important than speed. Depending on the complexity, it may take two people up to two hours to properly record a monument.

What you will need

- A compass (to check orientation of monument)
- Clipboards, survey forms, pens
- A measuring tape
- A camera, and a 'selfie stick' is useful to take photos inside a monument
- A torch to look into voids and to highlight inscriptions
- Protective clothing: gloves, high-visibility jacket, hard hat
- Secateurs and a pruning saw to cut back vegetation
- A scraper or a wooden spatula and a stiff bristle brush (for removing accumulated debris and moss from stone surfaces)
- A long thin wire hook with handle for removing loose material from joints, lifting vegetation from surface, etc
- A metal detector is useful to identify location of iron cramps



Carrying out the survey

- Always take great care when walking around monuments; often there is uneven ground caused by partially collapsed vaults and other results of burials.
- Start the survey by looking and not recording. Even the simplest of monuments will require detailed observation.
- Try and work out how the monument is constructed by examining the location of the joints between stones. Most monuments are very simple constructions – for example simple chest tombs may consist of a base, four sides (joined together by iron cramps at the top corner) and a top slab.
- Structural problems will tend to show at the joints; if there is a problem, they will tend to widen.
- If required, carry out limited removal of vegetation following the guidelines in **Clearing vegetation from monuments and memorials**, available as a downloadable pdf on our website.
- Once the monument has been examined in detail, fill out the **Monument and memorial condition survey form** (available as a downloadable pdf on our website) with as much detail as possible.
- If you encounter a major problem with a monument, for example, potential collapse or a large missing section, stop the survey and report the fact to the owner/responsible officer so that they can take appropriate action.
- Only clear the monument as much as to allow the survey to be completed. Complete clearing or remedial works should be undertaken as a result of the survey, not as part of it.

Further advice

See our downloadable pdfs:

- **Clearing vegetation from monuments and memorials**
- **Monument and memorial condition survey form**

These and more information available at:

historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/cemeteries-and-burial-grounds/