

Central Otago District Council

Cemeteries Handbook 2024

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Introduction

The Central Otago District Council Cemeteries Handbook (Handbook) contains the rules and conditions that apply to provision of services, operational requirements, and acceptable conduct in cemeteries owned by, or operated by the Central Otago District Council (the Council). The Handbook also provides information to assist the smooth running, operation, and provision of information to the public about council cemeteries.

The rules and conditions applicable to council cemeteries contained in the Handbook were made in accordance with the Central Otago District Council Cemeteries Bylaw 2020.

Operational Cemeteries

The cemeteries operated by the Central Otago District Council are:

- Alexandra Cemetery
- Blacks Cemetery - Omakau
- Clyde Cemetery
- Cromwell Cemetery
- Ettrick Cemetery
- Naseby Cemetery
- Nevis Cemetery
- Ranfurly Cemetery
- Roxburgh Cemetery
- St Bathans Public Cemetery

For interments in these cemeteries please contact the Cemeteries Administrator, phone 03 440 0618 or 027 328 1100, between the hours of Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm.

Email: cemeteries@codc.govt.nz

Web: www.codc.govt.nz

Other Cemeteries

The following Central Otago cemeteries are closed, and interments are no longer allowed.

- Litany Street, Cromwell
- Hamiltons Cemetery, Waipiata
- Manuherikia Burial Site
- Poolburn Cemetery

Trust Cemeteries

The following Central Otago cemeteries are each run by cemetery trustees: contact details are available on the council website. The Central Otago District Council Cemeteries Bylaw 2020 does not apply to these cemeteries.

[Trust Cemeteries - Central Otago District Council \(codc.govt.nz\)](http://www.codc.govt.nz)

- Blackstone Cemetery
- Drybread Cemetery
- Gimmerburn Cemetery
- Kyeburn Diggings cemetery
- Millers Flat Cemetery

- Moa Creek Cemetery
- Swinburn Kokonga Cemetery
- Tarras Cemetery
- St Bathans Catholic Cemetery - denominational

Definitions

Act means the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 or any superseding legislation.

Burial Right means the exclusive right to a burial in a particular plot.

Bylaw means the Central Otago District Council Cemeteries Bylaw 2020

Caretaker means any person appointed under clause 10 of the Bylaw. For the purposes of s17 of the Act, the Caretaker performs the functions of the sexton.

Cemetery or **cemeteries** means any land owned or operated by the council as a cemetery but excludes any closed cemetery.

Cemeteries Administrator means the person appointed under clause 11 of the Bylaw.

Closed Cemetery means a cemetery that has been closed in accordance with the Act.

Council means the Central Otago District Council.

Disinter or **disinterment** means the removal of a human body or ash remains from the earth or any vault.

Handbook means this document, which contains the rules and conditions that apply to provision of services, operational requirements, and acceptable conduct.

Inter or **interment** means the placement of a human body or ash remains in a grave or any vault.

Monument includes a headstone, plaque, panel, or other memorial to a deceased person.

Monumental Masonry Work includes the establishment, repair, or modification of a monument.

Natural Burial means a burial that has a low environmental impact, including the body not being treated with chemicals or oils that prevent or slow down the decay of the body by bacteria. Natural burial areas are planted with trees to encourage ecological restoration, long term, individual plots may not be identifiable.

1. General Information

1.1 Opening Hours and Hours for Interments

Cemeteries operated by the Council are open for public visiting seven days a week. Cemeteries are open for interments Monday to Saturday;

- Summer hours: 9.00am – 4.00pm.
- Winter hours: 9.00am – 3.30pm.
- Saturdays (year-round): 9.00am – 1.00pm

Cemeteries are closed for interments on Sundays and public holidays.

The expected time of arrival in the cemetery must be specified on the 'Application for Interment' form. If the expected arrival time is going to change by more than 15 minutes of the original notified time, the Cemeteries Administrator or Caretaker must be notified of the new time.

A Saturday fee will be charged for all interments, including ash interments, taking place on a Saturday. No interments will be scheduled on Sundays and public holidays.

Note: Due to its location and climatic conditions experienced in winter, access to the Nevis Cemetery for interments may not be possible.

1.2 Cemetery Fees and Forms

A table showing applicable cemetery fees can be found on the council Website along with application forms for accessing cemetery related services.

The applicable fees must be paid in full prior to the event (e.g. burial right, interment, disinterment, maintenance) taking place. Payment can be made by automatic payment or directly to council.

The person requesting an interment or disinterment must submit the appropriate forms to the Council's Cemeteries Administrator who will confirm the fee applicable, prior to the interment taking place. Further detail and arrangement regarding prior payment will be communicated to the applicant by the Cemeteries Administrator.

The forms referred to in this Handbook are available on the council website [Cemeteries - Central Otago District Council \(codc.govt.nz\)](http://codc.govt.nz)

- Apply for an Interment (Burial) Authority to Open a Plot
- Application for Adjacent Plot Purchase (Burial Right)
Cemetery – apply to erect a memorial headstone, plaque or monument

1.3 Booking Procedure

The Cemeteries Administrator is to be notified by email or telephone of an intended burial. The minimum notice for an Application for Burial or Interment to be processed by the Council at least 8 working hours prior to interment. For Nevis Cemetery, 3 working days prior to the time of interment is required.

1.4 Pet Burials

No animal(s), including cats, dogs, birds or fish, either as ashes or as a body, may be interred in a council cemetery unless placed in a sealed casket with the deceased.

2. Interments

2.1 Application for Interment

The person arranging the interment must lodge the following relevant applications with the Cemeteries Administrator:

- Apply for an interment (burial)

[Apply for an interment \(burial\) - My CODC](#)

- Authority to open a plot (additional to application for interment, if an interment of deceased person or human remains is to take place in an occupied plot)

No interments (of a deceased person or other human remains) can take place in a council cemetery until the Council has approved the application(s) referred to above, and the applicable fee(s) has been paid (refer section 13 of this Handbook).

2.2 Allocation of Plots

Council has responsibility for allocating plots for burials. If an applicant requests that an interment occur in a particular area of a council cemetery, the request will be considered provided there are vacant, plots available, and the request is consistent with any requirements in this handbook.

No burial or ash interment may take place without the approval of the person holding burial rights to that plot. If that person is deceased or debilitated, the immediate next of kin or the person acting on behalf of the deceased or their estate may give approval for a burial in the plot or placement of a monument.

2.3 Hours for Interments

2.4 Notification of Interment

Notification of all burials shall be submitted to the council at least *8 working hours* before the proposed burial (except for Nevis Cemetery which requires *3 working days'* notice).

Applications involving shorter notice may, as an exception, be considered by the council in consultation with the Caretaker and a late fee may apply. Applications must be made using the application for burial or ash interment form along with the authority to open a plot form if required.

2.5 Ash Interments

The bookings and forms required for ash interments are managed in the same way as a casket interment. The Caretaker will not be on site for the interment but returns to the site following the ash interment to ensure the area is secure.

Note: Scattering of ashes in any cemetery is not permitted.

2.6 Grave Preparation

Only a Caretaker appointed in accordance with the Bylaw may dig and prepare the grave (for ashes or a casket) in a council cemetery.

For burials in graves covered by a concrete cap or surrounds, only the Caretaker or an approved monument mason can break the concrete. A fee will apply (refer section 13 of this Handbook).

It is the responsibility of the owner of burial rights to that plot to reinstate the concrete cover after burial provided an approved monument permit is obtained. If that person is deceased or debilitated, that person's estate or the person who gave approval on their behalf is responsible for reinstating the cover after burial.

If the person who owns burial rights to the plot does not reinstate the concrete within a reasonable time, the council may remove the concrete completely, and replace with lawn, or cover over with stones.

A request may be made to the council for friends and family of the deceased to fill in the grave, subject to the conditions set out in clause 6.2 of this Handbook.

2.7 Interment Equipment

Equipment for carrying out interments is supplied and removed by the Caretaker, who is responsible for ensuring all health and safety procedures are complied with while on site.

2.8 Dis-interment / Re-interment

Any application received by the council shall be processed pursuant to sections 51 and 55 of the Burial and Cremations Act 1964 (or superseding legislation), and subject to the payment of fees referred to in clause 13 of this Handbook. This application relates to disinterment / re-interment of the deceased or ashes of the deceased.

2.9 Poor Person's Burial

The Burial and Cremation Act 1964 requires the council to bury the bodies of poor persons, and persons from any hospital, penal institution, or other public institution free of charge upon order from a Justice of the Peace. An application for interment form must still be completed by an authorised agent before the burial takes place.

2.10 Cromwell Returned Serviceman Area (in association with the RSA)

Ex-Service Personnel who have had war service or service that is defined equivalent to war service, and their spouses or partners, may be buried in any designated service person area. If the interment of a deceased veteran is to be in the serviceman area, a standard ex-service plaque is available at a subsidized rate through Veterans' Affairs New Zealand. In the serviceman area, only the standard ex-service memorial plaque is permitted. The plaques are of uniform style and there is no provision for personal messages or photographs.

If the interment is to be outside the service person area of the council cemetery, the next of kin can order a standard ex-service memorial at a subsidized rate through New Zealand Returned Service Association.

Details of war service need to be supplied on the 'application for interment' form. Failure to provide this information may result in the application being declined.

Specifications for Service Person's Interment:

Only service personnel and their spouse or partner may be interred in the serviceman area.

Double depth interments are permitted in the service person area to allow for the spouse or partner of the deceased veteran to be interred in the same plot. A double plaque commemorating both deceased persons is provided at a subsidized rate by New Zealand Returned Service Association.

If the spouse or partner wishes to be interred to the side of the service person, they can purchase the burial right for the adjoining plot subject to the standard fee (see clause 13).

Children cannot be interred in a service person's plot unless they are eligible for interment in the service person area in their own right.

War Service Eligibility & Contacts:

Please refer to Veterans' Affairs New Zealand website for information regarding eligibility www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz

Free phone (NZ): 0800 483 8372 (0800 4 VETERAN).

2.11 Locating Graves

Please contact the council or alternatively visit the council website for further information.

[Cemetery Record Search - Central Otago District Council \(codc.govt.nz\)](http://www.codc.govt.nz)

2.12 Grave Testing

A testing service is available at no cost to the applicant to obtain the availability of sufficient space for a second interment in an existing grave.

2.13 Natural Burials

The council has no areas designated for Natural burials.

3. Pre Purchase

3.1 Pre-purchase of Burial Rights

The council does not allow for the pre-purchasing of burial rights; however, the family has the option to purchase the adjacent plot following an interment. The following conditions must be satisfied:

- Council must be advised at the time of the burial or ash interment.
- An 'adjacent plot purchase' application form must be received within 10 working days from the interment.
- Payment must be made within 1 month.
- The purchaser is a relative of a deceased person who is being interred at a council cemetery and wishes to purchase a burial right to an adjacent plot.
- The adjacent plot is vacant and not subject to another burial right.

Unless the above conditions are satisfied, there is no ability to pre-purchase a burial right.

3.2 Application for Adjacent Plot Purchase

In order to pre-purchase burial rights, a person must lodge a completed application for adjacent plot purchase form with the council in accordance with the requirements in section 3.1 and pay the applicable fee (refer section 13 of this Handbook).

3.3 Duration of Burial Rights

Sometimes burial rights are never used, and thus take up valuable space in cemeteries. If no interment occurs within 60 years of the burial rights being purchased, then the council will attempt to locate the purchaser or next of kin to confirm if the plot is still required. If the purchaser and next of kin are unable to be located, then the plot ownership reverts back to the council in accordance with section 10 of the Burial and Cremation Act 1964.

3.4 Transferring Burial Rights

Should a plot no longer be required, the holder of the burial rights may transfer their interest in the plot to another party. The current burial right holder and purchaser must email the change of ownership details to the council.

The council will not re-purchase burial rights after they have been sold.

4. Burial Interments

4.1 Size of Burial Plots

Unless otherwise specified by the Cemeteries Administrator, the standard size for all new casket's burials are as follows.

- Burial plot: 1200mm x 2700mm

If a larger plot is required, arrangements must be made at the time of booking and confirmed with the Cemeteries Administrator.

4.2 Depths of Interments

The standard depth of interments shall be sufficient to enable ground cover, to the existing ground level, of at least a minimum of:

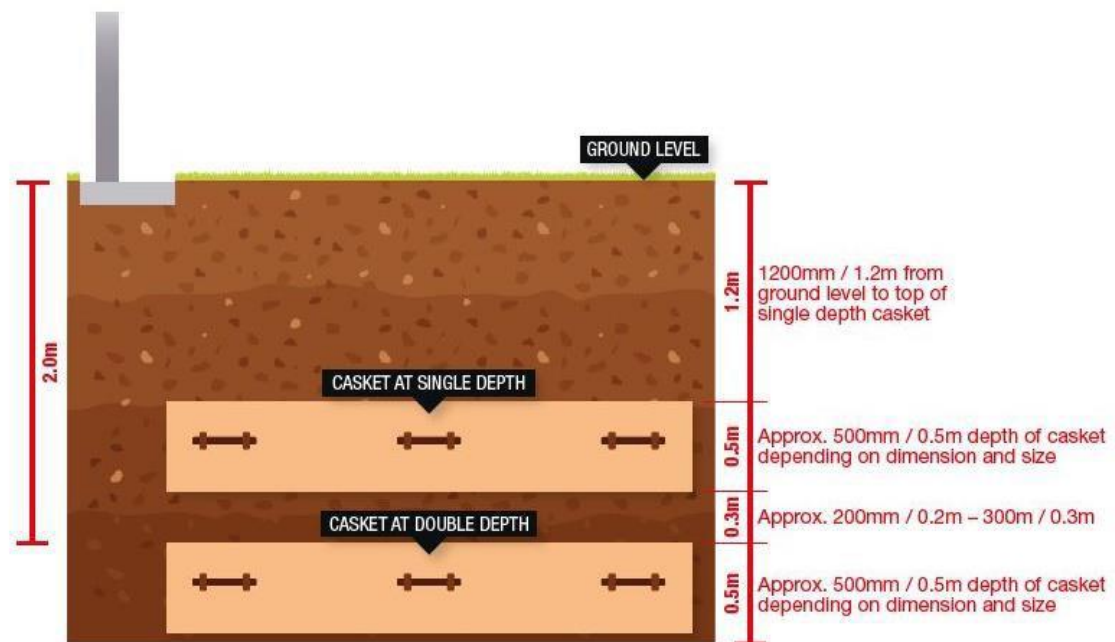
- Single interment: 1700mm
- Double interment: 2000mm

Please refer to Appendix A - Interment Depth for Casket Burials and Ash Interments.

The Cemeteries Administrator may allow a burial at a non-standard depth on a case-by-case basis; provided the Cemeteries Administrator takes into account any health and safety implications.

4.3 Burial Plots

No more than two caskets and four ash interments can be interred in each burial plot. [Please refer to the diagram below]



5. Ash Interments

5.1 Size of Plots for Interments

Unless otherwise specified by the Cemeteries Administrator, the standard size for all new ash plots is as follows:

- Ash plot: 600mm x 300mm

5.2 Depths of Interments

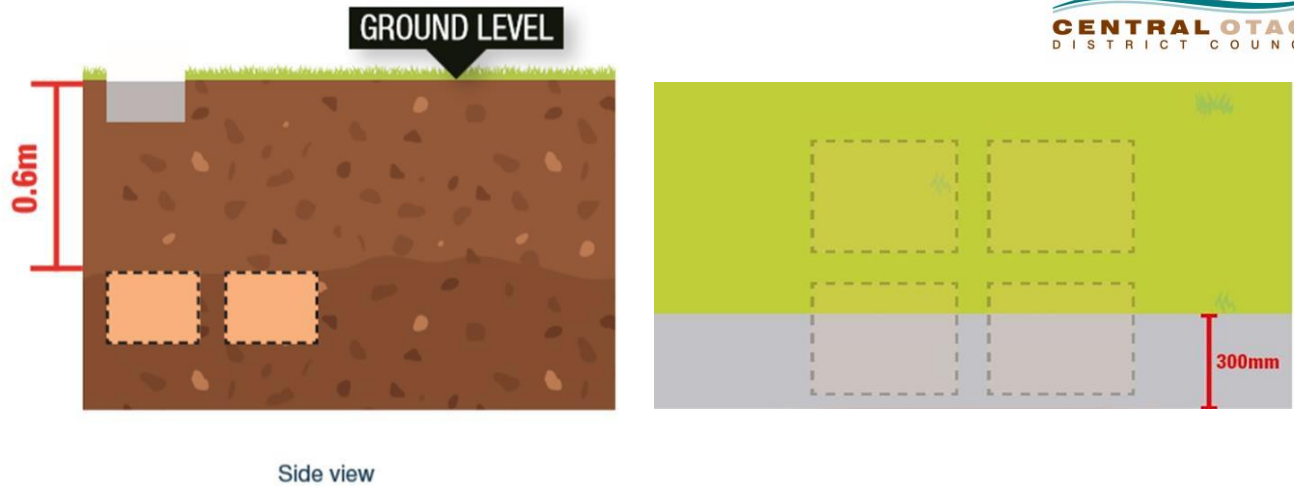
The standard depth of interments shall be sufficient to enable ground cover, to the existing ground of at least a minimum of:

- Ash interment: 600mm

All new ash plots can hold up to a maximum of four ash interments depending on urn size:

- Two in front of the headstone
- Two under the headstone

[Please refer to the diagram below]



6. Monumental Work and Monuments

6.1 Installation of Monuments and Plaques

Where appropriate the council will provide a concrete beam for headstones to be installed upon. cemetery beams can differ in size and it is up to the Monumental Mason to ensure the headstone meets the specifications outlined in clause 6.3.

Only monumental masons, recognised by the council, will be permitted to erect monuments within a council cemetery. Council endorses and recognises the importance of the New Zealand Master Monumental Masons Association, by 1st July 2021 all monumental masons working in council cemeteries are required to be members or hold a New Zealand Certificate in Stonemasonry (Level 4).

No monumental masonry work may commence until the council has granted permission for the work under the bylaw. A monument permit is required for any monumental work including alternations or modifications being undertaken in a council cemetery, to ensure the headstone is placed on the correct plot and also to ensure they adhere to specifications in this Handbook.

Owners of burial rights, or if deceased, the immediate next of kin, may give permission for a monument to be erected, or an additional inscription to be added to an existing monument. Typically, a monumental mason applies for the permit on behalf of the burial rights owner / next of kin.

The council can provide information regarding local monumental masons.

6.2 General Specifications for Monuments and Plaques

As per NZS 4242:2018 a monument must not be made out of sandstone, limestone, wood, fibreglass, ceramic, plastic, glass or any other unsuitable material specified by the Cemeteries Administrator.

No photographs, images or text of any description are permitted on the reverse side of a headstone. Concrete base work for all monuments shall:

- not stand higher than 150mm (usually 1000mm) above the highest point of the concrete beam or ground level, whichever is the higher;
- be laid to the satisfaction of the Council and in accordance with sound engineering principles as set out in NZS 4242:2018 Headstones and Cemetery Monuments;
- not be wider than 1000mm and stand no higher than 1500mm.

Plaques must have a minimum clearance of 10mm from the edge of the plaque to the edge of the plot on any ashes beam and be no more than 10mm thick. It is the responsibility of the plot owner to ensure that the plaque is of the correct dimensions for the particular plot concerned.

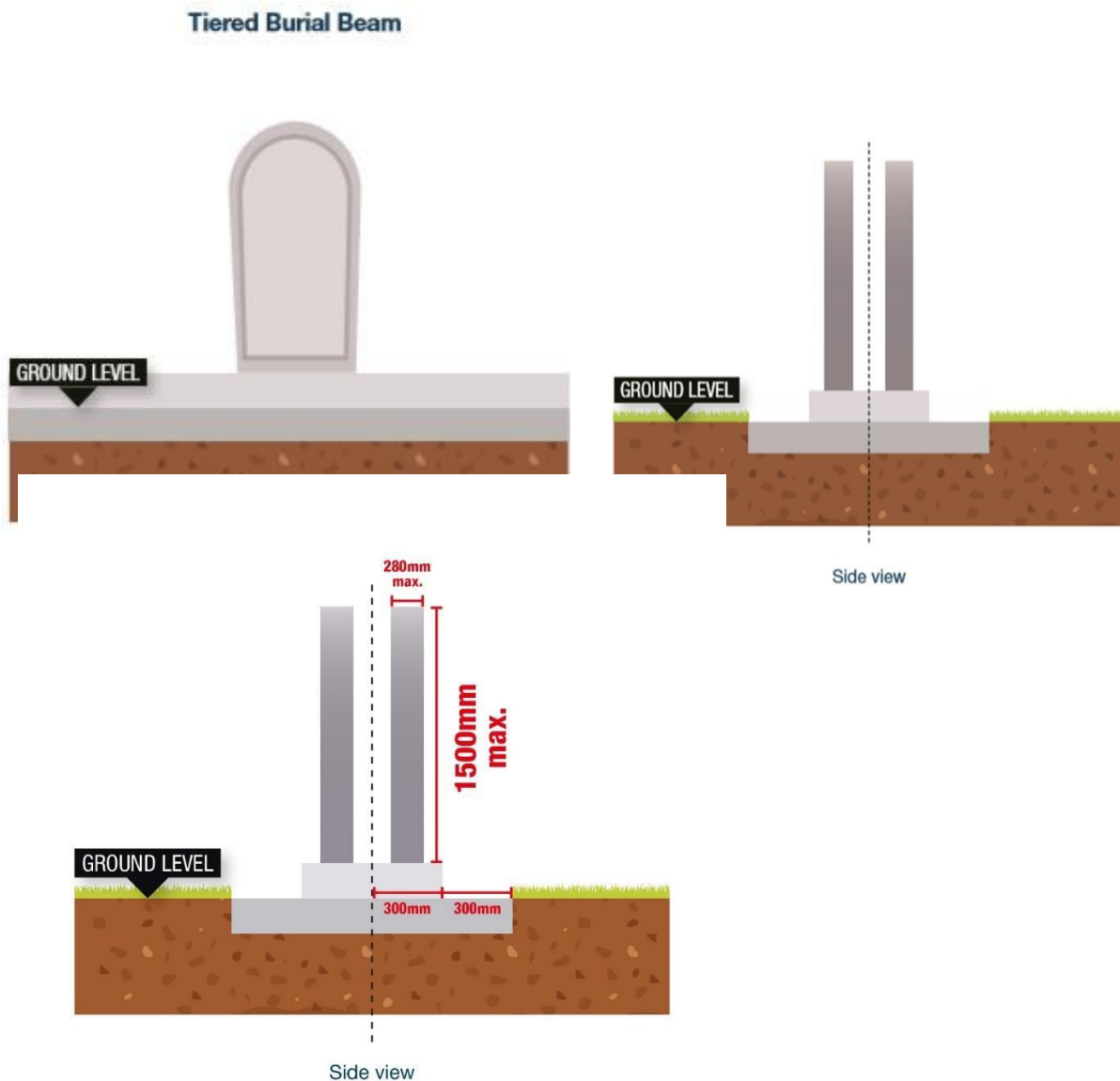
No monumental masons may mix cement or mortar anywhere in the cemetery otherwise than on a watertight platform.

All necessary precautions shall be taken to ensure that no damage is done to footpaths, roads, plots or grass.

6.3 Specifications for Monuments and Plaques for Individual Cemeteries

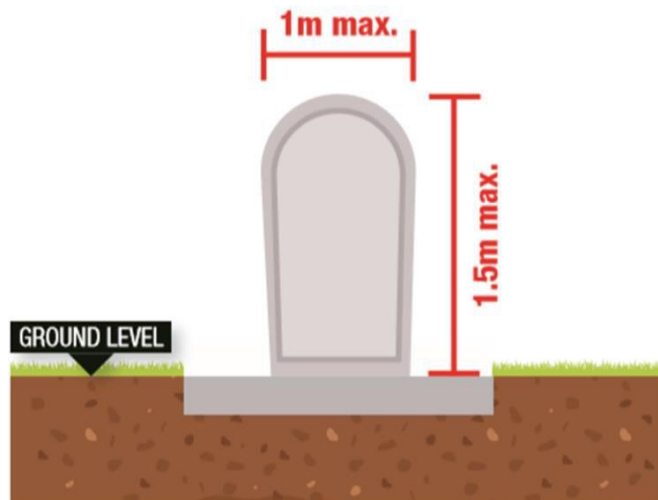
There are different requirements for monuments in different cemeteries. All monuments including headstones and plaques are to be constructed in accordance with NZS 4242:2018, sound engineering principles, and to the satisfaction of the council.

Tiered Burial Beam Specifications

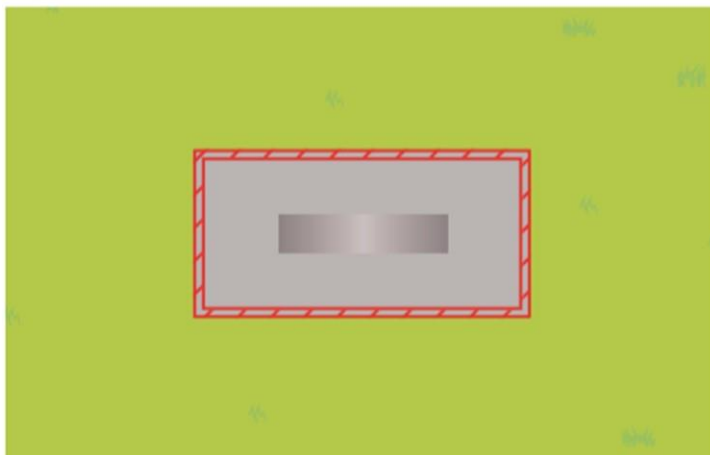


Flat Burial Beam and Plaque Specifications for a Burial Plot

Flat Burial Beam



Front view



The headstone/
plaque must
have minimum
clearance of
10mm from
the edge of the
beam

Top view

6.4 Monument Maintenance

Maintaining monuments is the responsibility of the burial rights owner or their representative.

The council does not take any responsibility for damage caused by earthquake, age or vandalism to any monument.

The council may remove from the cemetery any monuments that have fallen into a state of disrepair, if the Caretaker or Cemeteries Administrator determines that a monument is a health and safety risk. If the risk is not significant, the Cemeteries Administrator may give the person responsible (the owner or next of kin) written notice to repair or remove the item. Failure to comply with the notice will result in the monument being removed at the cost to the person who owns the burial rights to that plot.

If a monument poses a significant health and safety risk or there is no owner or representative available to effect repairs or permit removal, an approved monumental mason may lay the monument flat within the grave surround or remove it from the cemetery if there is no grave surround.

A photographic record of the monument will be taken and filed with the cemetery records if the monument is removed.

6.5 Removal

No person shall remove from any cemetery or grave, any headstone, monument or plaque, without permission from the council.

If the council is asked to remove a memorial, no responsibility will be taken for any damage done in the process of removal.

7. Health and Safety

7.1 Caskets

The casket size, shape, including the type and size of the handles are to be recorded on the application for interment. The council retains discretion to determine the appropriate dimensions of a suitable casket.

7.2 DIY Caskets

The council allows for DIY caskets in the cemetery; however, they must have prior approval from the funeral home. For further guidance around these please contact a funeral home directly.

7.3 Shoring Boards

Graves must be shored up in cemeteries for safety reasons. The shoring boards will be removed at the conclusion of the burial unless the family or friends wish to hand fill the grave. A request to hand fill a grave must be made on the application for interment form under 'special instructions' prior to the interment.

7.4 Request to Fill Grave

Friends and family of the deceased can request that the Caretaker allow them to fill in the grave. There are two options available:

- Only fill the grave to cover the casket
- Fill the complete grave by hand only

The council must be advised of this request before the interment takes place and is to be outlined under 'special instructions' on the 'application for interment' form. If this option is requested the Caretaker will be required to remove the shoring boards with the appropriate equipment to allow the grave to be filled. Families will need to follow the directions of the Caretaker during this process.

Instructions will be provided to funeral directors to explain the process for backfilling of interments at Central Otago cemeteries to families. The soil will be left beside the grave when the grave is dug.

Following the service:

- The Caretaker will dismantle the board set up which may require the use of a digger
- The Caretaker will place boards around the open grave for the family to safely stand on while back

filling the grave

- The Caretaker will supply shovels for the family to use.

There may be a 20-30-minute delay from the end of the service before backfilling can commence. Suitable space will be required around the grave at this time to allow the Caretaker to undertake the work in a safe manner.

7.5 Site Safety at Gravesite

The funeral director will advise the Caretaker upon arrival of the deceased person to the gravesite, and at that time the site will be handed over to the funeral director. The funeral director is then responsible for the safety of the members of the public at the gravesite until the funeral director formally hands the site back to the Caretaker and members of the public must follow the direction of the Caretaker.

Any persons in attendance and / or involved in a burial or interment procedure in a council cemetery, must adhere to all directions given by the Caretaker at all times.

8. Behaviour in Cemeteries

8.1 Vehicles in Cemeteries

Vehicles are only permitted to use designated roadways and car parks while in the cemetery. The use of vehicles must adhere to the cemetery speed limit.

Vehicles may only access cemeteries from:

- 7.00am to 8.30pm between October and March
- 8.00am to 5.00pm between April and September

The speed limit in all council cemeteries shall not exceed 20km/hour unless a different speed limit is specified, ordinary traffic rules are to be observed at all times.

The drivers of all vehicles must give way to any funeral procession (cortege) in any cemetery. If the Caretaker indicates that a vehicle should stop or move, the driver must respond as directed.

The Caretaker or Cemeteries Administrator may temporarily close the cemetery to vehicles, provided the closure is clearly displayed using appropriate signage. No private vehicle is to be left or taken into any cemetery when the cemetery is closed.

8.2 Control of Dogs within Cemeteries

Dogs are permitted in cemeteries as per the Central Otago District Council Dog Control Bylaw.

8.3 Horses and Other Animals

No horses or other animals are permitted in any council cemeteries.

8.4 Promotional Activities

The promotion or advertising of goods or services within a council cemetery is not permitted.

8.5 Photography or Filming

No commercial photography, filming or recording is permitted in a council cemetery unless it is solely

for a private purpose, or it is in accordance with permission granted by the council under clause 9 of the Bylaw.

8.6 Misconduct

No one may disturb or interrupt a funeral or cause an annoyance or nuisance within a council cemetery, or cause damage to land, buildings or chattels in a cemetery.

8.7 Authorisation to Conduct Certain Activities

No one other than a Caretaker or person authorised by a Caretaker may engage in interment or disinterment or operate any burial machinery or equipment in a council cemetery.

9. Tributes

9.1 Wreaths and Other Tributes

Wreaths, food items, and other floral tributes or ornaments not permanently fixed to a monument may be placed on the plot for a period of ten days following an interment. After ten days items must be removed or relocated to the concrete beam.

If items are not claimed after ten days, the council may remove and dispose of the items. The council may also remove any neglected or broken items.

No ceremonial fires are permitted.

9.2 Temporary Markers

Any temporary marker must be removed once a permanent monument is erected.

If the Caretaker, considers that a temporary marker has fallen into a state of disrepair, it may be removed.

10. Maintenance of Plots and Graves

10.1 Lawn Areas

The council maintains plots and graves in lawn areas including mowing.

Any plants (including trees and shrubs) placed on a grave following an interment will be removed after ten days and the area sown with grass seed. The grave will be maintained as lawn.

10.2 Areas with Planting

No new plants or shrubs are to be planted on graves without council permission.

Existing plants may remain providing family or friends maintain them. If any plants are not being maintained, encroaching outside the plot area or inhibiting cemetery maintenance, the council may remove them. Any plant identified in the Otago Regional Council's Operational Pest Management Plan, and found growing on a plot or grave, will be removed.

11. Disinterment

11.1 Disinterment

Any requests to disinter either a body or ashes must be made in the first instance to a funeral director, who must apply to the council for the disinterment.

Any application received by the council shall be conducted pursuant to sections 51 and 55 of the Burial and Cremations Act 1964 (or superseding legislation), and subject to the payment of fees as the council may determine from time to time. This application relates to disinterment / re-interment of the deceased or ashes of the deceased.

12. Genealogical Information

The council has a number of cemetery burial records available online:

[Cemetery Record Search - Central Otago District Council \(codc.govt.nz\)](http://codc.govt.nz)

The council is committed to adding all cemeteries it is responsible for to this data base. These will be added as and when resources allow.

13. Cemetery Fees

Check the council website link for the current schedule of fees and charges.

[Fees and Charges Schedule.pdf \(codc.govt.nz\)](https://www.codc.govt.nz/files/default/2017/07/01/Fees_and_Charges_Schedule.pdf)