



# Burial Ground Maintenance

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PYM Stewardship & Governance  
Thread Gathering  
January 27, 2024

# Taphophile

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A person who is interested  
in cemeteries, funerals  
and gravestones



# Burial Ground Maintenance Includes

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**Record keeping:** keeping track of who is buried where and who is expected

**Being a Liaison:** to your meeting community, funeral directors, gravediggers, monument companies, and even shipping companies

**Genealogy resource:** fielding inquiries from people about whether their ancestors are buried in your burial ground

**Grounds maintenance:** grass cutting, weed wacking, tending to dirty, sinking, broken and fallen headstones, fence, wall and pathway repairs

**Signage:** Do you have it? Do you need it? Do you want it?

# Overview

## **Record Keeping**

Paper vs Digital Records

Cloud vs PC Storage

Plot Purchases & Reservations

## **Care of Headstones**

Cleaning Headstones

Repairing Headstones

Photo Documentation

## **Succession Planning**

Passing on the Records





“There is no such thing  
as a perfect graveyard.”

– Ted Burchess, gravedigger

# Record Keeping

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You know where the bodies are buried

# Paper vs Digital Records

1824 vs 2024



# Moving from Paper to Digital Records

Paper records can be lost, damaged or destroyed by accidents

It can be time consuming to transcribe paper records, especially with large burial grounds, and there may be few volunteers available to assist

Transcription errors are not uncommon, with both names and dates

Software choices must be made: Word or Excel or FileMaker

What do you do with the old records? Should they be kept? Locally, or sent to Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore or Haverford?

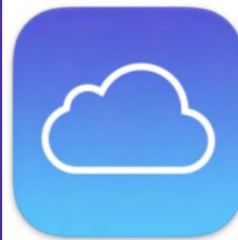


# Cloud vs PC Storage

“I’m too old for this \$#\*!”



OneDrive



iCloud



# Why Move to Cloud Storage?

No need to transfer files from person to person

Fewer chances for multiple versions to be made

Files are easily uploaded to the cloud drive – no re-typing necessary

The records are accessible to more individuals through sharing options

Data is secure and the software is always up to date

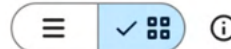
Plenty of storage space that is easily organized into folders, with the ability to link supporting or historical information to your data

# A Sample Cloud Storage Folder System

My Drive > BURIAL GROUND ▾



indicates shared folder




Type ▾


People ▾


Modified ▾


Folders


↑ Name ▾ ⋮

 1 - Supporting Docume... ⋮


 2 - Headstones ⋮

 3 - Reservations ⋮


 4 - Building & Grounds ⋮


 5 - PYM Burial Grounds ⋮


 6 - Burial Ground History ⋮


 7 - Memorial Minutes ⋮


 8 - Correspondence ⋮

 9 - Photos ⋮

 10 - Photos of NMM Pe... ⋮

 12- TO-DO LIST/Gravey... ⋮

 Sections II & III - Action... ⋮

 Z\_CONNECTIONS ⋮

# Plot Purchases & Reservations

Who are you expecting?





# Some Things to Consider

Have maps available for Friends looking to purchase space

Have a written burial grounds policy that is reviewed and updated regularly

Periodically review your pricing structure

Have current contact information for next of kin or estate executor

Review purchases/assignments that are more than 50 years old with no activity

Have this information in a place that is accessible to multiple persons, including the clerk of the meeting

**Newtown Friends Meeting  
Burial Grounds Policies**  
graveyard@newtownfriendsmeeting.org

The Newtown Friends Meeting Burial Grounds is located at 219 Court Street, Newtown, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Burial rights are available for members or long-term attenders. Anyone interested in reserving a burial site should contact the burial ground liaisons at [graveyard@newtownfriendsmeeting.org](mailto:graveyard@newtownfriendsmeeting.org). Availability and personal preferences will be discussed in addition to viewing sites in person.

The burial grounds are divided into four sections: **Section 1 East** is located southeast of the meetinghouse, **Section 1 West** is located southwest of the meetinghouse, **Section II** is located northeast of the meetinghouse and **Section III** is located east of the meetinghouse. All sections except Section 1 East are open for burials.

Once a location has been selected, a burial rights reservation form should be completed and returned to the burial ground liaisons along with a check made out to Newtown Monthly Meeting for the required contribution amount. Upon completion of this process, a Certificate of Burial Right will be issued.

#### Choosing a Plot

Choosing the size and location of a plot is based on the anticipated method of interment. All caskets must be enclosed in a concrete vault, the cost of which is the responsibility of the family; vaults are not needed for urns. A contribution to the perpetual care fund shall be made to secure burial rights. Rates for members and long time attenders are currently set at \$375 for half size plots, and \$750 for vintage and full size plots. Rates are doubled for non-members.

- ❖ Section 1 West plots are variable vintage size, but generally measure 3' x 7 ½' and accommodate a single casket or up to 4 urns, depending upon the number of anticipated monuments on the plot. Due to the size variability of the plots, it is recommended that a consultation with the burial grounds liaisons take place before selection in this section.
- ❖ Section II plots are full size, measuring 3' x 10' and accommodate a single casket, 6 urns, or both, providing the casket was interred first.
- ❖ Section III plots are half size measuring 3½' x 5' and accommodate up to 3 urns.

#### Arranging for a Burial

An administrative fee of \$150 for research and recordkeeping, measuring and marking the gravesite, coordinating with the funeral director, gravedigger and monument company is due when the burial takes place. This fee shall apply to each burial in the plot, and shall be deposited into the perpetual care fund.

For all casket and urn burials the family must employ the services of the Meeting-approved gravedigger with payment due at the time of interment. If only ashes are to be interred, the family may take responsibility for the burial themselves. All burials must have a member of the Building and Grounds committee present at the interment. A burial permit or certificate of cremation is to be received by a meeting representative on or before the time of the burial.

#### Headstone Guidelines

Headstones should be installed within a year; however, a headstone is not required. The maximum number of headstones is two per plot, except in Section III where only a single flat headstone can be accommodated. Careful consideration of the implications of future burials should be made at the time of headstone purchase.

Headstones should be simple in form, consistent with other surrounding headstones and must be set on an appropriate base which meets current gravemarker standards for accommodating the headstone. All foundations shall be installed by a meeting-approved contractor and paid for in advance. Natural stone such as granite, marble or limestone is permitted in all sections.

Coordination of headstone placement and changes to existing headstones takes place between the monument company and the burial ground liaisons, who will ensure that the company chosen is in possession of a copy of the burial ground policies. *All headstone designs must be reviewed to ensure compliance with current practice.*



**Section 1 West:** Headstones should be uniform in depth from top to bottom and should not exceed 19" wide x 12 ½" high x 4 ½" horizontal thickness at the base. The base should be installed flush with the ground and the headstone set on top. If several urns are interred in one plot, it is suggested that two names appear on the upright stone and any additional names be inscribed on a flat stone laid over the grave directly in front of the upright headstone and set flush with the ground.

#### Section II: Headstones

should not exceed 24" wide x 14" high x 8" horizontal thickness at the base. If several urns are anticipated being interred in one grave, families should either plan for the inclusion of more names on the original headstone, or place a flat stone inscribed with the additional names, set flush to the ground and laid over the grave directly in front of the upright headstone.



**Section III:** Headstones must be placed flush with the ground with a maximum size of 24" long x 18" wide x 6" deep into the ground. Only one headstone per grave is permitted.

#### Plantings and Other Tributes

In keeping with Quaker testimonies of simplicity, equality and respect for the earth, fresh flowers are welcome but plastic flowers, flower pots, wind chimes and solar lights are not permitted. Trees, shrubs and flowers are not permitted to be planted on individual plots. Fresh cut flowers will be removed after a reasonable length of time.

Wreaths and other small seasonal decorations may be put out for holidays provided they do not contain any plastic or other non-biodegradable material. The American Legion places metal flag holders on the graves of those Friends who chose to participate in armed conflicts and flags are placed in them throughout the year. Flags are removed at the discretion of the Meeting.

#### Transfer of Burial Rights

Newtown Meeting retains ownership of the burial ground and plots. Burial rights may not be resold or transferred without written approval from the Meeting. Burial rights are granted for a period of 30 years; these rights shall be deemed abandoned and revert back to the Meeting if no interments are made within this time frame. These rights can be extended for an additional 30 years through arrangement with the burial ground liaisons. Families who wish to make a donation toward the upkeep and improvement of the burial grounds may consult with the burial ground liaisons or Clerk of the meeting.

The Building and Grounds Committee of the Meeting has oversight of the burial grounds with burial ground liaisons coordinating all aspects of activity. The Burial Grounds liaisons, together with the Building and Grounds Committee, shall have the authority to waive all or any portion of these regulations and policies at their discretion.





Newtown Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends  
PO Box 224  
Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940

## BURIAL GROUND RESERVATION FORM

### Primary Contact information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ mobile \_\_\_\_\_ landline (circle one)

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting member: yes no (circle one)

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's names (including maiden name)  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Secondary Contact information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ mobile \_\_\_\_\_ landline (circle one)

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting member: yes no (circle one)

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's names  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Executor Contact Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ mobile \_\_\_\_\_ landline (circle one)

Email \_\_\_\_\_



Newtown Friends Meeting  
PO Box 224  
Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940

## Burial Fees

The following are the anticipated burial fees at Newtown Friends Meeting:

### 1. Plot purchase

- \$375 for a half-sized plot which can accommodate up to 3 urns
- \$750 for a full-sized plot which can accommodate one casket or up to 6 urns

*Make checks payable to Newtown Friends Meeting*

### 2. Burial fee

- Urn burial
  - \$500 (Monday - Friday)
  - \$600 (Saturday with an additional \$100 for every hour after 12 pm)
- Casket burial – included in charges from funeral home

*\* Make check payable to Ted Burchess - send to Newtown Meeting*

3. **Headstone fee:** the cost is variable, depending upon the size, choice of stone and length of engraving as well as the monument company chosen (see Burial Ground Resources for monument company recommendations).

4. **Foundation fee:** a foundation is required as it supports the headstone and prevents it from sinking.

- \$312 for an average two-foot by one-foot foundation, but cost varies depending on headstone size.

*\* Make check payable to Ted Burchess - send to Newtown Meeting*

### 5. Administrative fee

- \$150 for burial coordination and record keeping

*Make check payable to Newtown Friends Meeting. Please note "admin fee" on memo line.*

*Costs involving casket, urns, and vault fees, etc. are not within the scope of this document.  
Please consult with your funeral director for guidance and information.*



Newtown Friends Meeting  
PO Box 224  
Newtown, Pennsylvania 18940

### Burial Grounds Resources

### Funeral Homes

Swartz/Givnish Funeral Home  
323 E. Washington Avenue  
Newtown, PA 18940  
Phone: 215-968-3891  
www.swartzgivnish.com

Joseph A. Fluehr III Funeral Home  
800 Newtown Richboro Road  
Richboro, PA 18954  
Phone: 215-968-8585  
www.fluehr.com

FitzGerald-Sommer Funeral Home  
17 South Delaware Avenue  
Yardley, PA 19067  
Phone: 215-493-2228  
www.fitzgeraldsommerfuneralhome.com

Dunn Givnish Funeral Home  
378 South Bellevue Avenue  
Langhorne, PA 19047  
Phone: 215-431-3331  
www.dunngivnish.com

### Memorials & Headstones

Landmark Monuments  
100 Front Street  
Quakertown, PA 18951  
215-529-0318  
landmarkmonumentsinc.com

Newtown Memorials  
215-968-5413  
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Ted Burchess, gravedigger  
267-994-3179

Christiansen Memorials  
697 Bethlehem Pike  
Montgomeryville, PA 18936  
215-368-1001  
www.christiansenmemorials.com

### Newtown Meeting Contacts

Meeting Clerk  
Janet Braker  
clerk@newtownfriendsmeeting.org

Worship & Ministry Clerk  
Pat Sherwin  
psherwin4@yahoo.com

Burial Grounds Liaisons  
Wendy Kane & Sharon Hulihan  
graveyard@newtownfriendsmeeting.org



## Anna T. Jeanes Cremation Fund Application Form

1. Name of deceased member: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
3. Member's Meeting at time of death: \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Date of death: \_\_\_\_\_  
5. Place of cremation: \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Date of cremation: \_\_\_\_\_

7. If request is granted, payment should be made to: \_\_\_\_\_  
Payee (person who paid cremation costs)

8. Relationship to deceased: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City State Zip

10. Payee phone: \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Payee e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 12. Attachments: REQUIRED

- receipted bill for cremation from funeral home or crematory.  
 copy of death certificate

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date of application: \_\_\_\_\_

Signer's phone: \_\_\_\_\_ and e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check all that apply:

- Clerk of Care Committee  Member of immediate family  Nearest relative  Administrator  Executor

Comments: Please attach cover letter if more space is needed.

Applications may be e-mailed to: [grants@pym.org](mailto:grants@pym.org)  
or mailed to: Anna T. Jeanes Cremation Fund

c/o Director of Grant Making, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting 1515 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102



# Care of Headstones

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Time to get your hands dirty

# Cleaning Headstones

Let's play in the dirt





# Assembling Your Cleaning Tools



A wagon to easily transport all of the materials around the grounds

Soft brushes of various sizes and shapes

Wooden sticks for cleaning small, narrow spaces

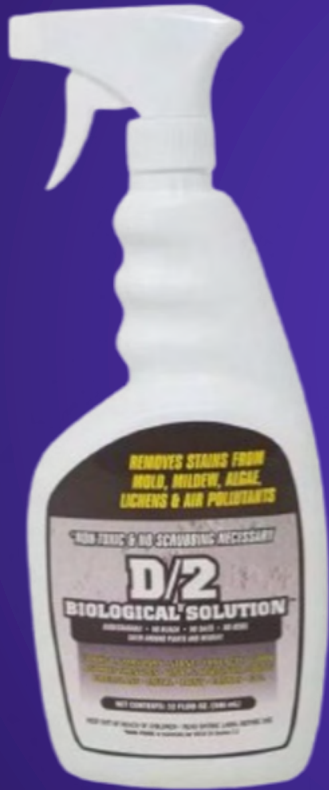
Hand pump water sprayer

Large bucket for water

Protective gloves

Spray bottle of D/2 Biological Solution

# What is D/2 Biological Solution?



A biodegradable cleaner that is pH neutral and contains no salts, bleach, or acids.

Tested and used by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Park Service

Removes a broad spectrum of environmental soils and stains

Safe to use around plants and animals

Works on all types of stone

1 quart spray \$25; 1 gallon refill \$50



# How to clean a headstone



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VEVzUo26ANY&t=6s>

# Spray and Walk Away Method



October 2023



January 2024



# Spray and Walk Away Method



October 2023



January 2024



# Spray and Walk Away Method



October 2023



January 2024



## Spray & Scrub Method





# A Spray & Scrub Success Story







Iva Sweigard

Daughter of Jesse & Martha John

May 26, 1914

June 16, 1914

*Died of whooping cough*





Before



After



# Repairing Headstones

The fallen, the sunken  
and the broken



# Resetting Headstones

Recommendations from the  
National Park Service

Measure the row

Remove dirt

Lift the stone

Widen and deepen the hole

Return stone to hole

Add gravel and level stone

Clean the headstone

# Raising and Resetting Headstones



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDMnX\\_XhKOo&t=15s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDMnX_XhKOo&t=15s)



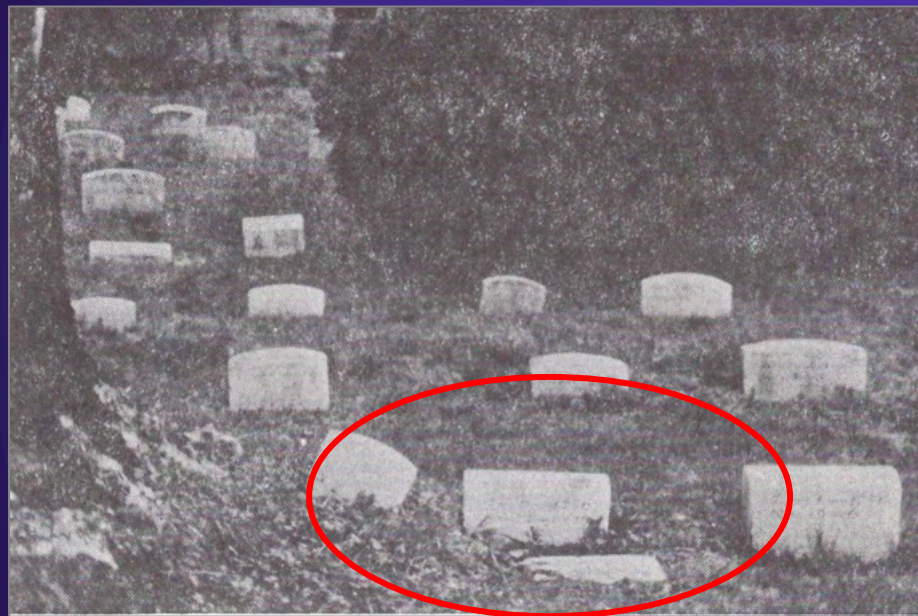
# Photo Documentation

What's the point?





# Gives Comparisons Over Time



Then



Now

# Preserves Your Meeting's History



1E-2-11 Schofield, Fannie  
(front)



1E-7-11 Schofield, Edith (top)



1E-8-37 Buckman, Mahlon (front)



# Documents Headstone Issues



# Succession Planning

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Passing on the Records



# Have a plan

'nuff said

Thank you!

Questions?