



# Top Tips for caring for your Historic Graveyard

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Always consult your **Local Authority Heritage Officer** for advice on best practice.
- **Check ownership of the graveyard** and seek the owner's permission.
- Carefully consider the impact of what you are planning. **Work should enhance the character and setting**, taking into account both built and natural heritage value.
- Works that may involve **ground disturbance or work to built fabric** require consultation with National Monuments Service. The necessary guidance can be found [HERE](#).
- **Make a plan!** A plan should describe the condition of the various features in the graveyard and what work is required. A useful template prepared by **HISTORIC GRAVES** can be found [HERE](#).

## THINGS TO AVOID

- **Excessive mowing and use of herbicides** as these impact native plants, insects and animals.
- **Removal of ivy** from ruins without expert advice and supervision.
- **Power washing, sand blasting or chemical treatment of headstones.** Modern recording methods can now be used to read many difficult to decipher inscriptions.
- **Attempts to flatten the 'humps and bumps'** of the surface and unnecessary removal of headstones (e.g. to place against a wall). This seriously affects the character of the graveyard.
- **Using tarmac or concrete** on new or existing pathways.

## MASONRY AND MEMORIALS

- **Get the necessary expert advice** for repair or conservation of structural remains.
- **Keep pathways clear of vegetation.**
- **Boundary walls should be maintained with care** e.g. by reusing original stone, keeping original features like stiles and using recessed pointing.

## NATURAL HERITAGE – BIRDS, BEES AND BATS

- Consider leaving part of the graveyard **unmown to benefit pollinators** like bees.
- **Boundary walls** are important habitats for many insects, interesting flora and even small animals and birds.
- **Let the dandelions bloom!** They are an important early food source for pollinators. You can find out more about the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan [HERE](#).
- If carrying out works on towers, roofs or crypts, **consider carrying out a bat survey.**
- **Hedges and trees** should only be trimmed between 1st September and 1st March.
- **Deep rooted trees** like sycamore can cause damage to boundary walls and other structures. Get advice on cutting back or removing larger trees and remove saplings.

For more detailed information on what kind of work **should and should not be done** when maintaining a historic graveyard, see the Heritage Council's **Guidance for the Care, Conservation and Recording of Graveyards**

