Clun Town Council with Chapel Lawn
Churchyard Committee
Terms of Reference

1. Background

Part of the churchyard of St George's Church in Clun was closed on 31st March 1893 by an order made in Privy Council on 28th October 1892. Closure was subject to two conditions:

i. In such vaults and wholly walled graves as are now existing in the churchyard burials may be allowed on condition that every coffin buried therein be separately enclosed by stonework or brickwork properly cemented;
ii. In such earthen graves now existing in the Churchyard as can be opened to the depth of five feet without exposing coffins or disturbing human remains may be allowed of so many of the relations of those interred therein at the date of this Order viz., widows, widowers, parents and unmarried children, as can be buried at or below the depth of five feet.

For reasons that are not now fully understood, the closure of this part of the churchyard was subsequently ignored and a large number of internments took place during the latter part of the twentieth century and into the early years of the twenty-first century.

In 2020, the then Churchwarden raised the matter with the Ministry of Justice which confirmed the closure in 1893. The St George's Parochial Church Council subsequently decided to exercise its right to transfer responsibility for maintenance of the closed part of the churchyard to an appropriate local authority under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972. Clun Town Council with Chapel Lawn accepted that responsibility from the Autumn of 2023.

Although maintenance responsibility has been transferred to the Town Council, legal ownership of the closed part of the churchyard is unaffected and all other rights, powers and functions remain under the control of the Church. The churchyard also remains a consecrated area subject to Faculty jurisdiction. The churchyard is widely recognised as an important part of the townscape of Clun, attracting visitors and providing a quiet space for rest, remembrance and reflection. It is also of historical significance: there are 34 listed Grade 2 listed memorials sited within its boundaries.

2. Objective

The Churchyard Committee shall oversee the maintenance, cleanliness, and safety of the closed part of the churchyard of St George's, Clun. The Committee aims to ensure that the churchyard remains a dignified, peaceful, and well-kept space for remembrance, rest and reflection.

3. Membership

There shall be a maximum of five members comprised of:

i. three town councillors, one of whom shall be the Chair;
ii. one of the currently serving Churchwardens;
iii. at the discretion of the Committee, one member of the public.

The quorum shall be the three town councillors.

The Town Council shall appoint the town councillors each year at its Annual Meeting, or at a council meeting as soon as possible thereafter, and shall nominate one of them as the Chair. Their terms of office shall end either with the appointment of their successors or on the fourth day after an ordinary election of the Town Council, whichever occurs first.

If there is only one serving Churchwarden, they shall automatically become a member of the committee on appointment to that office by St George's Parochial Church Council and shall remain a member until the appointment of their successor. If there is more than one serving Churchwarden, St George's Parochial Church Council shall notify the Chair of the Committee in writing as to the person who is to be the Churchwarden member of the committee.

The committee may co-opt one member of the public.

All members of the Committee shall be bound by the Town Council's Code of Conduct.

4. Meetings

The Committee shall meet at least quarterly, or as required. Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Town Council’s standing orders, policies and procedures.

5. Delegated Powers

The Committee has delegated authority to spend up to the limit of the annual budget agreed by the Town Council for its work. The Town Council shall set the

budget for the forthcoming financial year no later than 30th March.

The Committee has delegated authority to develop, commit to and implement a plan and schedule for the maintenance of the closed part of the churchyard, including but not limited to grounds maintenance, tree inspections and resulting work, monument inspections and resulting work, and inspections of the churchyard to identify and address any health and safety hazards. The Committee has delegated authority to procure services and to enter into and manage contracts with suppliers to undertake this work, ensuring that maintenance activities are carried out promptly and efficiently, maintaining the cleanliness and appearance of the churchyard.

The Committee has delegated authority to establish a working group to advise it in the discharge of its responsibilities; and also to make use of volunteers and voluntary organisations in its work.

The Committee has delegated authority to develop and adopt policies and procedures necessary for the proper and safe discharge of its work.

The Committee shall, in exercising its delegated authority, always comply with the Town Council's standing orders, financial regulations, policies and procedures.

6. Responsibilities

The Committee shall:

- Prepare a maintenance plan and schedule for the closed churchyard that shall be reviewed and updated annually;
- Carry out work in accordance with the maintenance plan and schedule and with any other priorities that may emerge during the year;
- Conduct regular inspections of the closed churchyard to identify and address any health and safety hazards, such as uneven pathways, damaged structures, or fallen branches;
- Take appropriate measures to mitigate risks and to ensure a safe environment for visitors and for those engaged in maintenance work;
- Maintain the memorials, graves and grave markers within the closed churchyard in a respectful and dignified manner, ensuring they are kept clean and free from debris;
- Liaise with St George's Parochial Church Council, with Church Authorities and with Shropshire Council as may be necessary to carry out its responsibilities;
- Coordinate with families or descendants regarding any necessary repairs or maintenance of individual memorials or graves, respecting insofar as is possible their wishes and privacy;
- Prepare and submit regular reports, at least 3-monthly or more frequently if it judges this to be appropriate, to the Town Council summarising maintenance activities, expenditures, and any notable developments or concerns;
- Engage with the local community to raise awareness of the importance of

maintaining the closed churchyard as a place of remembrance and cultural heritage;
- Provide opportunities for community members to participate in volunteer maintenance activities or contribute to the upkeep of the churchyard.

Adopted: 3 March 2026
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