

Memorial Masons Registration Schemes – The Facts

Issued by the Management Board of the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons - BRAMM

Background

In recent years there has been much publicity surrounding serious and fatal accidents in cemeteries, and the response by local authorities to try and prevent any further tragedies. Many lessons have been learned since the first wave of memorial testing some ten years ago, and most local authorities now have sensible and practical memorial management schemes in place. A very important part of such management schemes is control over what memorials are placed in cemeteries, and how they are fixed.



Unless you insist on compliant installations this will continue

Registration Schemes

Several years ago some authorities launched their own local memorial masons registration schemes. In order to work in the authorities' cemeteries, memorial masons businesses had to register on the local scheme by providing details of their public liability insurance, references for their workmanship and an undertaking that they would abide by the Council's rules and regulations. Some authorities charged the masonry company for such registration. For larger companies working in several authorities, this could be costly both in terms of money and time. The decision whether to have a registration scheme, and the conditions of such schemes were entirely a matter for the individual burial authorities – memorial masons did not generally have any input into the setting up of such schemes.

A National Register

In order to provide a better way forward, a national register was launched in 2004 as a joint initiative between burial authorities and memorial masons. All the organisations concerned believed that the best way forward was by working together on the scheme, with no one side of the industry having dominance. The scheme, called the **British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM)**, has the following aims:

- To establish a recognised uniform standard of workmanship and business practice throughout the UK.
- To promote **BRAMM** Accredited Businesses and Registered Fixers.
- To ensure all Businesses, Fixers and Burial Authorities on the **BRAMM** Register follow the current health and safety guidelines to protect both the public and their employees.
- To ensure that **BRAMM** businesses give a guarantee of the stability of their memorial through conformity with industry standards.
- To ensure the Scheme will be effectively policed ensuring that acceptable standards of fixing are maintained.
- To encourage on-going training and education within the memorial masonry industry.
- To promote a closer working relationship between Memorial Masons and Burial Authorities.

It was envisaged that the **BRAMM** register would replace local registration schemes, and would be a national register open to all burial authorities and memorial masons (subject to certain conditions to ensure high standards). Over the past five years the number of authorities, businesses and individual memorial fixers on the **BRAMM** register has continued to grow.

Unfortunately this year one of the participating organisations withdrew from the **BRAMM** Board following a ballot of its members. The National Association of Memorials Masons (NAMM) wished to increase their representation so that effectively the memorial masons would have control of **BRAMM**. This was felt to be unacceptable by the rest of the **BRAMM** board members, as one of the principles of the **BRAMM** scheme is equal representation for burial authorities and memorial masons. NAMM therefore withdrew, and have subsequently launched their own memorial masons registration scheme.

Clarification

NAMM have been contacting burial authorities to promote their new scheme, which has caused some confusion about the continuation of **BRAMM**. **BRAMM** continues to grow in strength and still has the same aim – to be a national register of accredited memorial masons to ensure high standards and protection of the public.

Burial authorities have asked for clarification as to which scheme they should join. The final decision is entirely a matter for each authority – they can choose not to join or run any scheme; they can choose to run their own scheme, either individually or jointly with neighbouring authorities; they can choose to join **BRAMM** or NAMM, or they can choose to join both. **The most important thing is to ensure that memorials fixed in their cemeteries are safe, fixed by competent masons to nationally recognised standards, and are provided through a legitimate business.**

Comparisons

Many burial authorities have asked what the difference is between the **BRAMM** and NAMM schemes. The table below helps to clarify this position. The main point to remember is that **BRAMM** is the only scheme that represents both burial authorities and memorial masons and is therefore the only truly independent Scheme.

	BRAMM	NAMM
Do burial authorities have representation on the management board of the scheme?	✓	x
Is the scheme free to join for burial authorities?	✓	✓
Is the scheme free to join for memorial masons?	x	x
Do businesses selling memorials have to be accredited	✓	✓
Is the scheme policed through an open and transparent complaints referral process?	✓	x
Is the scheme totally independent and not controlled by a single organisation	✓	x
Is comprehensive information available on the scheme?	✓	x
Is the scheme managed solely by those with a commercial interest?	x	✓
Is ongoing training and development required for licensed memorial fixers?	✓	x
Will all relevant industry qualifications be accepted as a route to obtaining fixer registration	✓	x

Conclusion

A burial authority can choose whether it wishes to run no scheme, their own scheme, or join one or more existing memorial masons registration schemes.

BRAMM was established to be a national register of accredited memorial masons to replace individual schemes and streamline accreditation processes. **BRAMM** also aims to raise standards in the industry, promote ongoing education and training for masons, and develop better working relationships between burial authorities and memorial masons.

NAMM withdrew from **BRAMM** when it was unable to gain control of the scheme and have now established an alternative. The most notable difference with the NAMM scheme is that burial authorities do not have representation on the management board – it was developed by memorial masons, for memorial masons and is administered by memorial masons (Quote – President of NAMM November 2009).

Burial authorities must protect the public from dangerous memorials by ensuring compliance with current national installation standards. How it does this is ultimately a matter of choice for the burial authority. However, BRAMM provides all the necessary reassurances, is independent and ensures that burial authorities and memorial masons, whether or not members of NAMM, all have a say in how the scheme develops.

