Midlothian Friends Meeting Memorial Garden

CAIRNS

This interesting word is of “Old Gaelic” origin from the lowland county of Midlothian, Scotland. It refers to a pile (or stack) of stones raised as a boundary marker or a memorial, as shown below.



Cairns have been used for a variety of purposes, from prehistoric times to the present - all over the world. They have been universally understood to indicate territorial importance due to their simple, yet distinct design and construction out of loose stones. Once erected by hand, the march of time tends to settle the individual stones in the pile into a permanent structure that has the feel of timelessness. The pile of stones slowly becomes knitted together, as decaying leaves and blowing natural debris settle within the crevices. A Cairn ultimately becomes one with its surroundings; yet, it remains a distinct marker.

In modern times, Cairns are still erected as landmarks. However, since prehistory they have also been built and used as burial monuments, and therefore invoke a simple unmarked spiritual connotation, with no written words needed. Modern Cairns are often erected for boundaries as well as memorial commemoration in rustic, natural graveyards, such as this one. The four Cairns placed in the corners of this Midlothian Friends Meeting Memorial Garden mark its boundaries.

Although Cairns by their nature are permanent markers that don’t require routine maintenance, passer-bys often add a stone as an acknowledgement, or even to provide a small bit of maintenance if needed. Indeed, a stone on an existing Cairn can also be placed there as a way for someone passing by to honor the dead.

Our Memorial Garden is available for the scattering or burial of loose cremains. However, use of a container of any kind is forbidden. For information about registering your loved one’s cremains here, contact us at our website at MidlothianFriends.org; then click the ‘Community’ tab and then the ‘Memorial Garden’ tab.

(More detailed information is on the reverse)

1. *Midlothian Friends Meeting’s Memorial Garden* is available to Midlothian Friends and other interested persons to bury or

scatter the cremains of deceased family members. Pets are considered family members and their cremains may also be placed in the *Memorial Garden*. *Midlothian Friends Meeting* assures that as long as the meeting exists the *Memorial Garden* will remain peaceful, accessible, permanent, and private; nothing will be built or placed where the *Memorial Garden* exists. The meeting also permits Friends or other interested persons to scatter or bury the cremains of loved ones in the surrounding woods on the meetinghouse grounds instead of the *Memorial Garden* - if they prefer. However, the same guarantee of "peaceful, accessible, permanent, and private" cannot be guaranteed into the future for wooded areas not in the *Memorial Garden*. The use requirements outlined in this document are applicable whether the cremains are scatter/buried in the *Memorial Garden* or elsewhere on the meetinghouse grounds.

2. The *Memorial Garden* is located in the large wooded area past the playground/grassy area and on the left of the path to the creek. The entrance is at the end of the parking lot and off of the playground/grassy area. Handicap parking is right next to that entrance. The specific boundary of the *Memorial Garden's* large wooded area has been designated by four corner stone cairns, built around surveyor's pins that permanently mark the four corners of the *Memorial Garden*. The cairns are built from light tan color river rocks found in Buena Vista, Virginia. Friends and their families are invited to add their own rocks to the cairns over time to signify their respect for the dead. An inner circle for the *Memorial Garden* has been provided at the end of the path into the garden. That inner circle and path is a space for reflection and contemplation rather than a place for the burial or scattering of cremains; no placement of cremains in that inner circle and path is permitted.
3. Cremains may be scattered or buried in the large wooded area of the *Memorial Garden* that is delineated by the four cairns. No container may be buried along with the cremains, whether it is biodegradable or not. This restriction applies also to other wooded areas on the meetinghouse grounds.
4. The following are not allowed:
    - No individualized markers, stones, rocks, or boulders with identifying information, and no communal monument or marker that lists names of those interned within the *Memorial Garden*.
    - No non-identifying (blank) objects, such as shrubbery/trees, stones, rocks, or boulders strategically placed just for the purpose of specifically identifying where individual or family cremains have been placed.
    - No manufactured stones, statues, or other man-made material may be used to identify where individual or family cremains are scattered or buried in the *Memorial Garden*.
5. All cremains placed in the *Memorial Garden* or anywhere on the meetinghouse grounds should be registered and recorded by the *Midlothian Friends Meeting's* Historian electronically. The recording of the names of pets is optional (as desired by the family), and the Historian should identify the recorded entry as being that of a pet. Should the recorded entry be for cremains buried or scattered on the meetinghouse grounds rather than in the *Memorial Garden*, that should be indicated.