

BENEFICE CHURCHYARD POLICY

Our churchyards are a precious part of the work of the parish churches in our villages and they play an important role in the life of our village communities. They provide a place to bury our dead, a place to go to remember, grieve and give thanks. They are also an important greenspace for God's creation to flourish providing valuable habitats for wildlife. They offer a quiet space for contemplation, reflection and prayer.

The rules and regulations that govern the use and upkeep of our churchyards seek to strike a balance between the various roles that they fulfil. Sometimes, this means that there are constraints on how some of us would like to manage the plots where our loved one is buried or interred and the churches seek to be as sensitive as can be.

Rights to Burial / Cremated remains

The following have a right to burial or interment of ashes within the relevant churchyards:

- . those who are resident in the parish
- . those who are on the electoral roll
- . those who die within the parish
- . those for whom a Faculty has been granted

A Minister can also allow anyone else to be buried in the churchyard, but there would need to be a qualifying connection with the parish, and this would need to be discussed with the clergy.

Churchyard Regulations

When speaking to the bereaved, they should be informed of the Diocesan and local churchyard regulations

- . The bereaved must follow the diocesan churchyard regulations
- . Headstones can only be introduced in line with the regulations or with a faculty. That means that the size, material and wording of any memorial has to be within the parameters of the regulations (CR1 Form).
- . There is no automatic right to a Headstone. Permission must be given before it is put in place.
- . Additional items are not always permitted depending on the terms of the diocese.

Before the burial

Before a burial takes place, the Registrar of Births and Deaths or the Coroner has to issue a certificate of disposal of the body.

The incumbent of the church should:

- Return the detachable portion of the certificate to the registrar within 96 hours of the burial
- And record the burial in the church registers in the normal way

Grave Spaces

Burial plots cannot be purchased to reserve.

Plots may be reserved in the churchyard through a faculty (but see note re St Peter's below).

If a deceased person is to be buried with a spouse already buried in the churchyard then this can be arranged so long as the grave was dug in anticipation, i.e. what is known as a double-depth grave.

If a burial plot has not been reserved then the Sexton will assign a plot, the executors will arrange the digging of the grave, usually through the funeral directors or by arrangement through the Sexton at StMM. We recognise the use of mechanical diggers, but there must be agreement by the Sextons before use.

St Peter's Alresford:

Reservation of grave spaces is not permitted at St Peter's Alresford following PCC resolution of 29th September 2007:

"It has been suggested by the Diocese that the PCC could pass a resolution that we will not support any further petitions for the reservation of space at St Peter's churchyard due to limited space. This resolution was passed unanimously."

St Anne and St Laurence Elmstead Market:

If the applicant is resident but has a preferred location for their burial plot, if available, then a written application to the incumbent can be made and brought to the PCC (Parochial Church Council) for "informal" approval. This is "informal" because there can be no guarantee but the plot would be noted as reserved for the applicant.

To guarantee the right to burial in a particular location at any time in the future, whether resident or not prior to death, then a Faculty can be applied for from the Diocese for which fees would be charged. More details can be provided on request.

The Benefice website gives a view of the Elmstead plots as a guide, along with advice on upkeep, churchyard rules etc.

St Mary's Thorrington:

Due to the expansion of the Graveyard there is currently good provision for both Burials and Ashes to be interred. For someone to Guarantee a plot they would need to apply for a faculty.

Headstone Stones

Headstones can be introduced in churchyards with the necessary authority.

-A CR1 form must be completed before a headstone can be erected.

- A faculty is required for memorials or gravestones of good design but are outside the regulations of the diocese.

- Churchyard regulations specify the size, material and inscription on a headstone to make sure that it is appropriate.
- Inscriptions should be simple and reverent
- Appropriate image can be etched or carved onto the headstone
- If the bereaved wants something different from the standard headstone, contact the diocese for advice.

Garden of Remembrance

St Peter's Alresford:

Names will be placed on a joint memorial stone, this will be organised by the church.

St Anne and St Laurence Elmstead Market:

Names will be put on a stone tablet, this will be organised by the church

St Mary's Thorrington:

Names will be put on a plaque, this will be organised by the church.

Churchyard regulations for Visitors

All our churchyards are within a rural setting therefore we are keeping them as green sites and need visitors to help us by abiding with our policies.

Visitors to follow Church of England Regulations

- Only fresh flowers* in fixed bases may be placed on gravestones.
 - Garden of Remembrance should only have memorial tablets plus any fresh flowers* placed around the edge of the Remembrance area in approved holders.
 - No plastic containers, artificial flowers* or any other ornaments should be placed on graves or around the Memorial Garden (due to them becoming untidy and also damaging equipment used in the upkeep of the church yard)
- * Note: St. Anne & St. Laurence PCC recently approved the use of good quality artificial (e.g. silk) flowers whilst in good condition in place of fresh flowers.
- Items that do not meet the regulations will be removed.

Policy agreed: November 2023