



Churchyard Guidelines for Burials and Interment of Ashes

Introduction

St Mary's churchyard is a much loved feature of Walberton Village and is cared for by a dedicated group of volunteers. The aim is for a well cared-for churchyard, which provides a tranquil setting for the ancient church and for those visiting the graves of deceased friends and relatives, a place for reflection and prayer and for wildlife to thrive. These guidelines are provided so that this aim may be achieved.

Burials and Interments

St. Mary's churchyard is available for burials and the interment of the cremated remains (ashes) of deceased residents of the parish, of those who were on the church electoral roll at the time of their death and of anyone dying in the parish. The undertaker will assist relatives in their formal application to the vicar, whose consent is required to the burial or interment.

The vicar's consent is also required if relatives wish to mark the burial or interment with a permanent memorial (e.g. a gravestone). A decision on the form of any memorial does not have to be taken immediately following the death; normally a period of at least six months should be allowed following the burial or interment before any permanent memorial is erected. However, relatives should be aware that the Diocese has issued detailed regulations, which will be followed, as to the design of memorials. A copy of those detailed regulations may be obtained from the vicar or the undertaker.

The following is a summary of the Diocesan regulations that will be applied in St Mary's churchyard.

Headstones on graves – for adults will be no more than 4ft nor less than 2 ft 6ins high (1200mm, 750mm). Memorials such as urns, crosses, hearts, open books and statuary, other than headstones, are not permitted except by faculty. Memorial

stones may be in limestone, sandstone, slate or granite; kerbs, railings, fencing or chippings are not allowed as these create difficulty or danger when mowing.

Cremated remains – horizontal tablets or plaques will be permitted to be sized 1ft 9ins x 1ft (530mm x 300mm) – again in limestone, sandstone, slate or granite.

In both cases, prior to commissioning any work, the style of the headstone, the materials to be used and the wording must be agreed in advance with the vicar.

Aftercare of Graves and Memorials

As a general rule, it is the responsibility of the families of the deceased to maintain the memorials. Some may have a contract with their stonemason to ensure the headstone is in good order.

Where families live locally, graves can be regularly trimmed by them and often relatives will return to leave flowers on the grave as a mark of their love and respect for the deceased. It is helpful if families can then remove floral tributes as soon as they start to wilt or otherwise deteriorate. Families should normally only leave flowers or pot plants.

To maintain the feel of a country churchyard and a safe environment for visitors and the churchyard working party, who have to mow and strim, families are requested to follow the following guidance which is based on the Diocesan regulations:

- Please do not plant trees or shrubs on the graves
- Please do not use artificial flowers or foliage and do not decorate the graves with other objects such as mementoes, windmills, toys or little animals.
- In the interests of safety, do not leave flowers or plants in glass containers. An aluminium flower holder buried in the soil is encouraged.
- In the interests of safety, do not decorate the grave or place of interment with loose stones
- Please do not install a kerb around the grave, which remains the property of the church

Care of the churchyard

The churchyard is cared for on behalf of St. Mary's PCC by a team of volunteers, whose work includes mowing the grass, pruning the shrubs and hedges and clearing up any items that may detract from the appearance of the churchyard.

When it appears that relatives are not able to care regularly for a grave (this may be due to advanced age or the family may no longer live locally) the churchyard volunteers will trim the grass and remove floral tributes and their containers and other items placed on the graves or tablets as they deteriorate.

The churchyard supervisor is authorised to remove items that are thought to be inappropriate in a Christian Churchyard or are a danger to health and safety.

St. Mary's PCC – contact Church Office 01243 552792