

Policy Number 7

Benefice of Inkberrow with Cookhill and Kington with Dormston

A POLICY FOR THE CARE AND UPKEEP OF GRAVES AND MEMORIALS

Agreed Policy

The Benefice seeks to provide the churchyards as a place of precious memories, prayer and peace. In order to ensure that the graveyard and cremated remains sections are kept tidy and beautiful for everyone, we are providing these simple guidelines for all those who tend and visit graves.

If you have any concerns, or need help or advice on any of these matters, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the vicar:

Vicar: Rev'd Bruce Rienstra

01386 792222

General Rules for all Graves

1. The Church asks families and friends of the deceased to keep their graves tidy and well-tended, as far as they are able.
2. Floral tributes and wreaths should be removed as soon as the flowers have died. Wreaths placed at Christmas should be removed by the end of January.
3. For up to the first 12 months after the death of the deceased or until a permanent memorial is erected (whichever is the sooner), the Church will consider requests to allow appropriate items of remembrance, symbols or artefacts to be placed on the grave. In such cases, permission should first be sought from the parish priest or churchwardens. After 12 months, only floral tributes will be allowed.
4. Families are asked not to introduce any chippings, fencing or edging as these cause serious health and safety issues. Any such items may be removed without warning by the Church Council.
5. Plastic flowers are not suitable – please do not leave them in the churchyard.
(Artificial flowers fade quite quickly and then look tatty; because they are light they are vulnerable to being blown off the grave in bad weather; they can become damaged by machines used to cut or trim the grass.)
6. Please ensure that packaging and oasis from arrangements etc is taken home. However, dead flowers may be placed in one of the black compost bins situated within the church yard.

Please do NOT place plastic, glass or wreaths containing metal or plastic on the compost heaps or compost bins.

7. Ideally cut flowers or pot plants brought to the churchyard should be removed when they have died. However, it is appreciated that some visitors come from a distance; therefore the churchyard team will tidy up from time to time to remove dead plants.

Burial Plots (full-sized graves)

1. Floral tributes and wreaths are welcome, but should be removed when the flowers have died.
2. It is not appropriate to plant shrubs or large bushes such as roses or rosemary. The only 'perennials' that may be planted within the grave space are spring bulbs – which can be easily mown or strimmed after they have flowered.
3. In the first two years after a burial, small annual plants may be planted close to the headstone within the grave space. Thereafter, for ease of mowing, it is more appropriate for the grave area to be restored to level turf.
4. It is the responsibility of the relatives of the deceased to make sure that the grave surface is kept level as the ground may continue to sink for some years.

Garden of Remembrance Plots for Cremated Remains

1. Floral tributes and wreaths are welcome, but should be removed when the flowers have died.
2. A maximum of one pot plant or equivalent is allowed on the plot at any one time. *(These have to be moved by the churchyard maintenance team to prevent the strimmer from damaging them. When several pots are placed it is difficult for the team to remember which plot they belong to. They also overflow onto adjacent plots.)*
3. It is not appropriate to plant shrubs or large bushes such as roses or rosemary. The only 'perennials' that may be planted around the grave space are spring bulbs – which can be easily mown or strimmed after they have flowered.

Garden of Remembrance for Cremated Remains without Memorial

1. There are specifically no permanent memorials to be left in this area.
2. An annual plant may be placed each year, which will be cleared at the end of the flowering season.
3. An application can be made to have a name placed in the book of remembrance as a permanent memorial for ashes in this area.

Diocese of Worcester - Rules for the Introduction of Churchyard Memorials

Memorials

All four of our churches have churchyards which are 'open' - that is, there is space in each for burials and cremated remains,

The introduction of memorials, to mark places of burial, are subject to Rules set by the Chancellor of the Diocese of Worcester (see below). These rules seek to ensure that churchyards are both reverent and beautiful, and are kept wisely for future generations; and, that memorial stones match their surroundings and can gradually weather with the passing of time.

Reservation of a grave space

It is often possible to arrange for the reservation of a grave-space, although, if the applicant resides outside the Parish, they must show a relevant connection with the church or churchyard concerned, and the Parochial Church Council must agree to support their application. This is because there is limited space in the churchyard, and priority must be given to residents of the Parish.

Reservation is arranged through a legal process which involves fees amounting to approximately £350. Anyone requiring information about this should, in the first instance, contact the Vicar of the Parish. The form of Petition can be obtained from the Diocesan Registrar, SME Solicitors, 8 Sansome Walk, Worcester WR1 1LW (01905 723561) (stuart.ness@smesolicitors.co.uk).

Standards for memorials

1. Dimensions of Headstones

a) Headstones should be no larger than 4 ft (1200 mm) high measured from the surface of the ground, 3 ft (900mm) wide and 6 ins (150mm) thick. They should be no less than 1 ft 8 ins. (500mm) high, 1 ft 8 ins. (500mm) wide, and no less than 3 ins. (75mm) thick, except in the case of slate materials, which may be thinner but no less than 1 ½ ins. (38mm) thick.

b) Horizontal slab stones not exceeding 2 ft (600mm) wide and 6 ft (1800mm) length, sunk so that the surface of the whole is level and flush with the surrounding earth.

c) Simple crosses not exceeding 3 ft (900mm) in height.

2. Base and Foundation Slab

A headstone may stand on a stone base, provided that it is an integral part of the design and does not project more than 4 ins. (102mm) beyond the headstone in any direction, except where a receptacle for flowers is incorporated. The vase must be flush with the top of the base, which may then extend up to 8 ins. (200mm) in front of the headstone. The base must be fixed on a foundation slab set flush with the ground and extending from 3 ins. (75mm) to 6 ins. (150 mm) all round so that a mower may pass freely over it. The base of a memorial may be so shaped that it can be inserted directly into the ground at sufficient depth to ensure stability.

3. Materials

a) All memorials must be made of natural stone with no reflecting finish, or of hardwood. Stones traditionally used in local buildings, or stones closely similar to them in colour and texture, are to be preferred. Black, green, blue or red granite are not permitted under these terms and conditions, nor granite darker than Rustenberg grey, no black nor white marble, synthetic stone or plastic.

b) An Incumbent or Priest in Charge may propose to the Diocesan Advisory Committee that stones of other types and colours should be permitted in a particular churchyard and, when the proposal has been considered by the D.A.C. he may seek the authority of the Chancellor to introduce such stones into the churchyard. If the Chancellor authorises the introduction of such stones, he will specify the further types and colours which may be used.

4. Designs

Headstones need not be restricted to a rectangular shape, and curved tops are preferable to straight-edged tops. Memorials in the shape of a heart or a book are not permitted, nor are photographs, portraits, kerbs, railings, chains, chippings or glass shades.

5. Sculpture

Figure sculpture and other statuary can only be authorised by faculty.

6. Epitaphs

Inscriptions must be simple and reverent, and may include appropriate quotations from literary sources. Inscriptions should be incised, or in relief, and may then be painted. Plastic lettering is not permitted.

7. Trademarks

No advertisement or trademark should be inscribed on a headstone. The mason's name may be inscribed at the side in unlead letters, no larger than ½ in (13mm) in height.

8. Flowers and Vases

Except where the design of a headstone includes an integral receptacle, any flowers must be placed in a removable container sunk completely into the ground. Small stone vases not exceeding 12 ins. (300mm) x 8 ins. (200mm) x 8 ins. (200mm) may be permitted- Consent for these must be obtained and the appropriate fee paid- The use of plastic and other artificial flowers is not permitted.

9. The Parochial Church Council may level any grave mound at its discretion at any time more than twelve months after the latest interment in the grave.

10. Prior to any headstone being erected, the person responsible for installing that stone shall make the grave free of any dip or mound.

11. Commemoration after cremation and burial of ashes: The Parochial Church Council (PCC) encourages the use of a Book of Remembrance (available at St Peter's, Inkberrow and St Paul's, Cookhill). However, individual memorial stones are allowed; they should be of standard material, size and design. Such memorial tablets may be erected vertically or horizontally, and must not exceed 21 ins. (520mm) x 21 ins. (520mm). The total surface of a horizontal stone must be level and flush with the ground.