

St. Mary's Buckland

Guidance for Gravestones & Ashes Memorials

Purpose of this pamphlet

It is a difficult and distressing time when a loved one dies, with many practical arrangements to be undertaken. An important consideration is their final resting place. This pamphlet provides guidance when considering having a burial and gravestone or an ashes plaque within our church graveyard.

It may also assist relatives & friends of those who visit or tend existing gravestones or memorial stones in our graveyards.



Example grave and Ashes Memorial stone

St Mary's Buckland is an ancient Listed Building, with some gravestones dating back to the early 1700's. We wish to maintain the traditional aesthetics of our historic graveyard and conform with regulations from the Church of England. Our church is open most days, providing a beautiful, serene space for private prayer and reflection.

Guidance on Churchyard burials and Ashes Plots

In the first instance, contact the Rector to discuss the family's wishes. The Rector will provide details of what is possible. In general, members of the church congregation and residents of the Parish can be buried with a gravestone or have ashes plots in the churchyard. Although physically we have limited space available, it may be possible to reserve a gravestone plot. The Rector can provide guidance on locations of available space and how to make a reservation.

In the absence or unavailability of the Rector, please contact the Churchwardens.

Gravestones

Please bear in mind that following a burial, it is not possible to erect a stone gravestone until the soil has settled, usually for a period of at least 6 months. In this interim period, a small wooden cross and plaque maybe erected.

Gravestones must blend with most of the gravestones in the churchyard. The preferred material is natural stone (e.g. sandstone, limestone, slate) with a non-reflective, un-polished surface. Headstones must be in the range of 75cm to 1.2m high, or up to 1.5m high for stone crosses. For the safety of churchyard users, they must be professionally fitted and set in concrete for stability.

Some graves from the past had horizontal kerb stones, rails or horizontal raised tombstones. These are no longer permitted. Prior to the commissioning of a gravestone, the design must be approved by the Rector or churchwardens.

Ashes Memorials

The ashes garden has memorial plaques, each of which have a maximum size of 30 x 30 cm. They are laid horizontally at about the level of the turf. The inscription should be incised into the stone, and should include name, dates of birth and death and age. An optional short memorial phrase may be added.

Maintenance responsibilities

The fees for burials and ashes interment cover the work involved in the services and a small contribution to ongoing maintenance. We welcome the tidying of graves by friends and relatives.

The overall maintenance of the graveyard remains the responsibility of the Church, with contractors employed for regular grass mowing and tree surgery, and a small team of volunteers undertaking pruning and tidying.

In placing flowers and plants on the memorials, please dispose of those flowers and plants when they have passed their best. Please use the garden waste bins provided on site. Otherwise, wilted flowers may be removed by our team.

Adding flowers & plants

It is possible to make a grave personal with small additions, such as

- After a loved one has been buried, the unwrapped fresh flowers from the service can be placed on the grave
- Some gravestones have a place for a small vase or display of fresh flowers
- A few spring bulbs can be planted (up to 10) to bring bright, living flowers to the grave
- A single small ceramic or terracotta pot (to 15 cm height, not plastic) with a living plant can be placed above the grave or alongside the ashes stone.

It is not permissible to place ornaments or artificial flowers on graves.

If in doubt, do discuss your wishes with the Rector. Some of these matters are in place to ensure that the grass cutting can be neatly cut around and across graves.

Further Guidance

As with all churches, we must meet certain standards of graveyard maintenance, imposed and inspected by the Church of England's Diocese of Southwark. We aim to exceed these requirements, with a graveyard that complements our attractive church, which is a Listed Building.

We trust that you can visit your deceased loved ones here, enjoying the peace and comfort of our church and its surroundings.

For further details of the Church of England's guidance and regulations, you may read:

www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/new-burials-and-memorials

southwark.anglican.org/support/for-our-churches/buildings-dac/churchyards-memorials/diocesan-churchyard-regulations/



For further information on arranging a burial or ashes interment, please contact the Rector or churchwardens, whose details can be found on the notice board by the front gate or on the church website:

www.stmarythevirginbuckland.org.uk

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