

CHURCHYARD POLICY

Review date: January 2027

1. Our churchyards

St George's Parish church, West Grinstead and St Michael's and all Angels, Partridge Green. There is also a civic cemetery adjoining St Michael's churchyard.

2. Our Memorial Gardens

A memorial garden is for the interment of ashes with appropriate memorial tablets. These areas are specially designated and exist at both churches.

3. Who has a right to burial?

3.1 Every parishioner has a right of burial in the churchyard of the ecclesiastical Parish in which they live, provided there is space available and the churchyard has not been closed for burials.

3.2 Any person whose name is on the church electoral roll at the time of their death also has a right to burial.

3.3 Any person dying in the parish, whoever that person is.

3.4 A person having had a strong connection with the Parish may be interred or have their ashes interred at the discretion of the incumbent.

3.5 No other person can be buried in the churchyard without the consent of the incumbent who must have due regard to any PCC guidance. If the incumbent declines to allow the burial of a person who has no right of burial, his or her decision shall be final.

3.6 Reservation of spaces for graves or interment of ashes cannot be allowed, unless a faculty has been granted by the Chancellor reserving a grave space in the churchyard.

4. Who owns the churchyards?

4.1 The 'ownership' of the churchyard is vested in the incumbent (or the Diocesan Bishop during a vacancy).

4.2 The exercise of the right of burial; interment of cremated remains; the reservation of a grave space by faculty; or the erection of a memorial do not confer any rights of ownership upon the relatives of the deceased person or upon any other persons in respect of the churchyard itself.

5. Ownership of memorials

5.1 The 'owner' of a churchyard memorial is the person who erected the monument in question, and after his/her death the heir or heirs at law of the person or persons in whose memory the monument was erected. The primary responsibility for upkeep falls on the owners of the memorial who are the heirs of the person or persons commemorated.

5.2 However, it is the PCC which has responsibility for churchyard maintenance including health and safety. When the heirs cannot be traced, the PCC must bear the responsibility for any dangerous monuments within the churchyard. The PCC must take appropriate steps to deal with any dangerous situation, such as an unsafe monument. Such action will be limited by the funds at its disposal.

6. Who is responsible for the type of monument or gravestone?

6.1 The erection of a memorial in a churchyard or the alteration or removal of any existing memorial, or the introduction of any object (such as, but not exclusively, benches and containers for flowers) into a churchyard is a privilege, not a right.

Parish of West Grinstead

(the Parish church of St George and the church of St Michael & All Angels, Partridge Green)

6.2 Memorials and inscriptions may only relate to the remains of a person buried in the same churchyard.

6.3 Materials, sizes, design and inscriptions of all memorials to be erected in a churchyard must follow and comply with the Chancellor's guidelines, and details of all proposed memorials must be submitted to the incumbent for approval before any such work is undertaken.

6.4 In law a faculty is required before the erection of any memorial. But in practical terms in exercise of his jurisdiction the Chancellor has delegated limited power to the incumbent to permit the erection of gravestones and to allow simple alterations to existing memorials if, and only if, the Chancellor's regulations relating to gravestones are fully complied with.

7. Cremated remains and 'Gardens of Remembrance'

7.1 There are specific areas set aside by faculty for the burial of cremated remains unless the remains are to be interred in an existing grave. Cremated remains should be reverently poured into a specially prepared hole in the ground between 18 and 24 inches deep. If the cremated remains are to be interred in a container, it must be of perishable material, preferably wood.

7.2 The scattering of cremated remains is not permitted. The Chancellor's guidelines relating to cremated remains and memorial plaques must always be adhered to.

7.3 Permission from the incumbent is required for the burial of cremated remains and memorial plaques and his/her presence is also usually required at the interment.

8. Are there regulations about the management of family plots?

8.1 The Diocese give guidance similar to all Dioceses in the Church of England:

- the placing of fresh flowers is permitted, but they should be removed when they have perished;
- the growing of grass on a level grave for ease of maintenance should be encouraged;
- Remembrance Day poppies and Christmas wreaths are permitted, but must be removed after no more than two months;
- artificial flowers are discouraged, as they are not biodegradable and soon deteriorate in quality and appearance;
- it is not permitted to have individual gardens, or to plant garden type shrubs or herbaceous plants.
- solar lights, wind chimes, sentimental objects, and additional vases are not allowed.

8.2 The PCC/incumbent reserves the right to remove anything that becomes unsightly. In rare circumstances the incumbent may allow a limited number of sentimental objects on a plot for a limited period of time to allow for grieving.

9 Past variations from the current guidelines/policies do not create a precedent.

This policy was approved by the PCC at a meeting held on 23 November 2021

SignedPosition