

The Church of St Thomas the Martyr Winchelsea

Churchyard Policy

Responsibilities

1. The care and maintenance of the Churchyard is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council (PCC). The Incumbent Minister, or his appointed representative is responsible for approving any requested burial or interment. Approval of gravestones or other markers is the responsibility of the Diocesan Chancellor, although this authority is delegated to the Incumbent. An applicant can appeal the Incumbent's decision to the Chancellor, but all costs in so doing would be borne by the appellant. In summary, any required permissions must be obtained in advance.

Fees and Authorities

2. Charges for burial or interment will be levied at the statutory rate set by the Church of England and any additional fees set by the PCC. All fees are payable prior to the date of the burial or interment.
3. By seeking to use the Churchyard, the bereaved must be aware that they are subject to rules set by the Church of England, including in respect of the conduct of the service and the marking of the grave.

Right of Burial or Interment

4. The right of burial or interment is not restricted to the baptised, or to regular members of the Church congregation. Specific burial places may not be reserved, except if a family plot already exists, although particular requests will be considered by the Incumbent. The churchyard is reserved for the following:
 - a. Persons resident in the Parish.
 - b. Persons whose names are on the church electoral roll of the Parish.
 - c. Persons dying in the Parish.
 - d. Persons not meeting the above criteria may be buried or interred in a family grave, provided the capacity exists, at the discretion of the Incumbent.
5. Following burial or interment and if desired, permission for a headstone or marker to be erected, or amended, may be sought from the Incumbent. This must be done to a standard set by the Diocesan Chancellor and advice will be provided by the Incumbent.
6. Ashes must be placed in a bio-degradable bag, or poured into the plot. Caskets are not permitted. The place of interment of ashes may be marked by a small flat plaque, lying flush with the ground, located at the discretion of the Incumbent, again subject to the standards set by the Diocesan Chancellor.
7. Trees may only be planted exceptionally and with the prior approval of the PCC

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Use of the Garden of Remembrance

8. The Garden of Remembrance is also intended for the interment of ashes of those listed at paragraph 4 and, depending upon the actual circumstances, particularly to assist the bereaved, for those without such Parish connections. Ashes interred in the Garden of Remembrance are not marked by a plaque or headstone, but will be recorded in the Book of Remembrance in the Church.

Exceptions

9. There may be special reasons to vary this policy, or make exceptions to it. However, such variations from it may only be approved by the Incumbent, who will take into account the Church's wider responsibilities for pastoral care.
10. These may involve, despite the right at paragraph 4, consideration of any particularly outstanding contribution an individual may have made to the Parish. They may also involve consideration of individuals with historical links to the Parish.
11. However, the Incumbent will consider all exceptions jointly with the PCC, having due regard to the needs of the Parish and past precedent. No variation will be applied during any Interregnum, when the Parish is without an Incumbent and, if necessary, the advice of the Rural Dean will be sought.

Care of the Grave

12. This is the responsibility of the family, who are also bound by the standards set by the Diocesan Chancellor' in respect of what may be done to, or placed, on the grave. In any case of doubt, the Incumbent or Churchwardens must be consulted.
13. Ornamentation is not permitted and the PCC reserves the right to remove any decoration that is considered to be inappropriate or out of sympathy with the churchyard as a whole.

Appeals

14. In the case of any dispute which cannot be resolved locally, the escalation route is to the Bishop of Lewes via the Archdeacon of Hastings.

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