

HOLY TRINITY

SOUTHCHURCH



BOOK OF THE CHURCHYARD

“Remember those whose ashes lie here”

“Rest eternal Grant unto them O Lord”

The English churchyard is a place of quiet and repose, a place where comfort is drawn from the peace provided by being close to God and to his church. Some churchyards in the Diocese of Chelmsford are as old as the Domesday Book 1087. Many are not as old, but all are places where peace prevails. *Quote taken from the Diocese of Chelmsford Churchyard Handbook.*

Holy Trinity Churchyard is a very special area because, like the Church, it is consecrated ground. This means that it has been set aside in the past by a Bishop as sacred and, therefore, holy ground.

Our churchyard is now closed for burials and can only be used for interment of ashes either in an existing grave or in the Garden of Remembrance.

Although there are legal rights in relation to the interment of ashes they confer no right of ownership. This means that the placing of items on a grave without permission is technically a trespass and can be asked to be removed. The person with the legal responsibility for making rules in churchyards is the Chancellor of the Diocese.

The rules relating to burial, interment of cremated remains and other matters relating to churchyards are set out in the Diocese of Chelmsford Handbook and below is a short summary of some of the rules for your guidance:

Containers for Interment of Ashes

Ideally the cremated remains should be interred directly into the ground without any container. If any container is used it must be bio-degradable e.g. cardboard box. By the canon law of the Church of England, cremated remains cannot be scattered on the surface of the churchyard.

Flowers placed on Graves or in Garden of Remembrance

Only fresh flowers or stems cut from shrubs and bushes including holly will be permitted. **PLASTIC OR ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS OF ANY KIND WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.** This is because they are not in keeping in a churchyard and are inconsistent with any concept of a Garden of Remembrance which is intended to contain only plants and flowers which grow naturally. Also they are not in keeping in today's world of climate change and are ethically unsuitable.

There are three limited exceptions:

(1) Poppies at Remembrance Sunday; they serve a special purpose for a limited period at a time of National Remembrance

(2) Wreaths at Christmas

(3) Wreaths at the anniversary of the death of the deceased, for a limited period of two weeks

When wreaths and cut flowers have withered and become unsightly they will be removed from graves and headstones.

As we are now a closed churchyard the responsibility for maintaining the churchyard is now under the control of Southend City Council and their rules are similar to those as set out in the Diocese of Chelmsford Churchyard Handbook. The introduction of any kind of fencing, edging, or other artificial enclosure of any kind round a grave is not permitted and would be unlawful and would be subject to an order for removal. They also present a hazard and create difficulty when cutting the grass with modern equipment. The planting of spring bulbs which die away before the grass needs cutting is preferable.

Memorials on graves

Any memorial placed over a grave has to be carefully chosen in recognition that the churchyard is sacred ground and is the area forming the setting for the church building. Care has to be taken that nothing incongruous or detrimental to that setting is introduced.

There is no legal right by common law or statute to place a memorial or any other item in the churchyard and permission has to be obtained in each case. Anything which is placed in the churchyard without permission is there unlawfully and can be ordered to be removed. Distress can be avoided by observing this rule.

Obtaining permission to erect a memorial over a grave has to be applied for by completing a CR1 form which must be signed personally or by someone in the family. Until this form is completed in duplicate, and the application has been approved in writing, no memorial should be ordered from a stonemason. The forms can be obtained from the Incumbent, Area Dean, most stonemasons and undertakers.

Memorials permitted using a CR1 application are headstones of certain dimensions such as parallel sides and the top should be straight or curved. The Stonemason should be able to assist with the correct choice of headstone. Occasionally a Faculty may be required.

Inscriptions

The words of the inscription are usually the most significant element of what appears on a headstone and some decoration is permissible. However, any inscription or decoration must be seemly and appropriate for a headstone being placed on sacred ground. It is advisable to discuss the wording or decoration with the Incumbent or Area Dean initially. Again a CR1 form is required. Occasionally a Faculty may be required.

Kerbs

Kerbs are not permitted nowadays. They deteriorate and become partially or wholly sunken into the ground or broken. They present a hazard and create difficulty for those maintaining the churchyard with modern equipment.

CHIPPINGS

Chippings and other stones of any kind within kerbs are now not permitted as these also create hazards for modern equipment and can cause damage if thrown by vandals.

Plaques

It is preferable to add inscriptions to the existing memorial. If there is insufficient space on a headstone, then the reverse side can be used where possible. If it is not possible then a CR1 or Faculty must be applied for.