

## Somewhere Special

Every resident of the Parish has the right to be buried in the churchyard. The Rector may also, at his or her discretion, give permission for the burial of ashes, and for the burial of non-parishioners, provided that space allows.

The churchyard is the setting for the parish church, a place of Christian worship. Imagery and inscriptions on memorials should be simple, reverent and appropriate. They should be in keeping with the churchyard's atmosphere.

## Churchyard Rules

The Rector has the right to decide where a burial shall take place. However, it is possible to reserve a space by special permission and with the agreement of the Parochial Church Council. The Rector will be able to provide details of the procedure and the cost involved.

Wheathampstead Parochial Church Council (*the PCC*) together with the Rector, is responsible for the care, maintenance and safety of the Churchyard in accordance with the Churchyard Regulations of the Diocese of St Albans (*the Regulations*). In doing so the PCC strives to ensure that the Churchyard is harmonious in appearance and a worthy setting for our village Church. The PCC has no desire to be unduly restrictive or bureaucratic but we draw attention to the more significant Regulations below. We would ask all who visit the Churchyard to observe these rules.

## Headstones and Memorials

Before planning a headstone or other memorial or contacting a memorial mason, please contact the Rector, as permission will be required before you can proceed.

Headstones for insertion directly in the ground or on a stone or vase base, and memorial tablets, must comply with the Regulations. Among other things these cover size, shape, materials

and inscriptions. A full copy of the Regulations is displayed in the south porch of the Church.

There are a number of things which are **not allowed** including: **raised curbs, railings, fencing around a grave, chippings, photographs, lights, statues and ornaments** (except headstones which have been properly authorised) within the grave space.

Some monuments from the past may not conform to today's Regulations. Unfortunately, this cannot be accepted as a reason for not adhering to the current Regulations.

## Graves

Following a burial, at least six months, but preferably a year, should elapse before a headstone is erected, in order to allow the grave to settle. The earth should be levelled before any permanent memorial, with the necessary permission, is erected. The grave may be grassed over.

If graves are not levelled after twelve months, the PCC reserves the right to do so.

Small flowering annual plants or small bulbs can be planted in the soil of any grave in front of the headstone, but **more elaborate planting schemes, rockeries, shrubs or trees are not allowed**.

## The Burial of Ashes

St Helen's churchyard contains an area specially set aside for the burial of ashes. The names of those whose ashes are buried there are entered into a Book of Remembrance in the church. Only memorial plaques **purchased through the PCC with approved wording** may be attached to the rails in this area. **Planting is not permitted** in the area for burial of ashes.

Cremated remains alternatively may be placed in the existing grave of a relative. These arrangements should be discussed with the Rector.

## Maintenance of Graves and Memorials

The maintenance, appearance and safety of graves and memorials remains the responsibility of relatives, and should be carried out in compliance with these rules. The PCC will take steps to make safe any memorials which present a hazard. If the PCC incurs expense because a grave or memorial is not in a safe condition, then it reserves the right to recoup the expense from the relatives concerned.

## Grass Cutting

Grass cutting by contractors of open areas of the churchyard and around graves takes place regularly throughout the growing season. Grave areas will be cut if there is sufficient access for their equipment.

## Vases

**Freestanding vases are not permitted** under the Regulations, as these are a safety hazard for visitors as well as for contractors mowing or maintaining the Churchyard. The paved edgings in the area for burial of ashes are an exception to this. (see [Flowers](#) below)

A **fixed vase** made of stone with a memorial inscription may be permitted in a burial space **instead of** a headstone or cross. **Do check with the Rector** about what vases are allowed.

## Flowers

Fresh flowers add to the environment of the Churchyard and may be placed directly on a grave. They may also be placed in a vase which has been authorised.

In the area for burial of ashes, flowers should be placed only on the paved edging provided beneath the wooden rails and not in the area for burial of ashes itself.

Fresh flowers – a symbol of the gift of creation and the brevity of life – are preferred but

where artificial or silk flowers are used they must be of natural colours, good quality and appropriate to the season.

Remembrance Day poppies are allowed but should be removed by Christmas at the latest.

Christmas wreaths are allowed at Christmas time but should be removed by Candlemas (2nd February).

### Water

A tap is situated close to the church wall, to the right of the south porch; another is found by the vestry on the north side.

### Removal of Withered Flowers

Flowers, whether fresh or artificial, and wreaths should be removed once they have deteriorated, become unsightly, or have died.

Cellophane, Oasis and wreath-frames should be put in the bin. If the bins are full, please take away all material that is no longer needed – do not leave it next to the bins, as this will create additional work for our volunteers.

The PCC reserves the right to arrange for the removal and disposal of unsightly flowers – whether fresh or artificial – as well as any items not permitted by these rules. Empty vases which contained flowers placed in the area for burial of ashes are tidied away behind the privet hedge surrounding this area before being disposed of.

### General

The Church is usually **open daily**. Please treat the Churchyard as a special place that requires respect from all users. No ball games are permitted. Please keep your dog on a lead and under

control at all times, and clear up any dog mess.

The aim of these rules is to have a fitting and dignified last resting place for your loved ones, to allow easy maintenance and to keep the Churchyard in sympathy with its village and Christian setting.

### Before you decide

Much disappointment and unnecessary heartache can be avoided if the Rector (or his/her representative) is contacted before arrangements are decided on. Obviously, he/she can only authorise what falls within the Regulations. It helps to work with him/her in trying to keep the local churchyard in a place of tranquility and good taste.

Please be aware that the Regulations are updated from time to time, so that a memorial or grave permitted under past Regulations may not now be authorised.

Your co-operation in making your parish churchyard attractive and well ordered will be much appreciated. Thank you.

This leaflet has been produced (with acknowledgements to Kimpton PCC) by Wheathampstead PCC. Wheathampstead PCC is a Registered Charity.

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## Guide for Churchyard Users



St Helen's Churchyard is special because it has been set aside as a Christian place of burial. It is a place of peace and tranquility where precious memories can be cherished.

Making arrangements for the funeral of a loved one is never easy, but it is important to find out beforehand what the special arrangements are for our churchyard.

We hope that this leaflet will be helpful to those arranging a burial or the burial of ashes in St Helen's churchyard.