

Planning a Garden of Remembrance

Setting the scene

The practice of cremation has grown significantly during the past 100 years and has now reached nearly 70% of all burials, so the provision of a specific area for the burial of ashes is a matter which more and more parishes are likely to have to consider. This leaflet sets out the aspects which your PCC will need to consider in the early stages of planning a new or extended Garden of Remembrance and aims to answer some of the questions which might arise during discussions.

Do we need an area set aside at all?

Cremated remains may only be buried in a part of the churchyard set aside for the burial of cremated remains or in an existing grave with the consent of the parish priest. To set up a Garden of Remembrance and to establish local practice, a faculty is needed. However, in small parishes with only a small number of burials of ashes, the Archdeacon has power to authorise a part of the churchyard to be set aside without the authority of a faculty. (See the Guide to The Churchyard Regulations 2004)

Defining the purpose

Even before starting to make any plans, it's a good idea to get the PCC to think about the context of your Garden of Remembrance and list the various purposes that it should fulfil. For example it is likely that it should fulfil one or more of the following:

- a place of burial
- a pleasant garden
- a place for relatives and friends to come, to remember and reflect
- a part of the churchyard
- a place for reflecting the Christian message

Special local circumstances

Your PCC members will have their own experience and views, but the following may also give them a start in identifying particular local issues:

- Do the families involved tend to be church members?
- Do the families tend to be local?
- What are the particular rules or practices governing other local churchyards, crematoria or local authority cemeteries?
- Is there a long-standing custom for a particular form of commemoration of burial of ashes?

And next.....

Once you have agreed the general framework of ideas, you will need to see if a particular site is suitable, and then consider some more detailed questions:

The location

- is our proposed area large enough to meet projected needs?
- is it away from trees and tree roots?
- is it well drained or will we need new drainage?
- will it be readily accessible for those attending interments and for subsequent visitors?
- is there good access for the elderly and disabled?

Layout and access

- is there an existing path to the area, or will a new path be needed?
- where will the path run and what materials will be used?
- will the area be visually defined, e.g. by a wall or planting?
- is an actual garden to be created or is the area to be grassed?
- who will look after the area and what level of maintenance will be required?

Identifying the area

You will probably want to inform visitors about the purpose for which the area has been set aside:

- what form will the notice take?
- what will be the most suitable position?
- what will be the most appropriate wording?

Dealing with flowers

Visitors will often bring flowers and plants. You will need to allow for this in a communal way, which does not become untidy or interfere with maintenance. This could be:

- a paved or gravel area to one side
- a ledge around a central memorial
- a trough to support vases and pots etc.

Local practice should encourage fresh flowers as the symbol of the gift of creation and of the brevity of life. However, artificial flowers are not appropriate. The PCC may remove dead and artificial flowers to keep the Garden of Remembrance tidy.

Methods of commemoration

The method of commemoration of the names of those whose cremated remains are interred in a garden of remembrance will vary according to local custom and may include:

- books of remembrance [bearing in mind access to the church]
- vases
- a central memorial stone or cross
- paths with engraved kerbs
- memorial stones
- wall with plaques

Further guidance on memorial stones may be found in the Guide to The Churchyard Regulations 2004 – see the extract at the end of this leaflet.

Your questions...

Does the land have to be consecrated?

Yes; a new area being set aside for the burial of ashes does need to be consecrated, although individual burials may sometimes be allowed by faculty in unconsecrated land. If the area is not consecrated, or you are uncertain of its status, you should contact the Diocesan Registrar as soon as possible so that the matter can be clarified and consecration arranged if required.

Do ashes have to be buried in caskets?

The Bishop has directed that ashes may either be buried in a suitable perishable or biodegradable container or buried loose in an appropriately sized hole in the ground. Ashes must be covered with soil. They may not be scattered or strewn.

How much space do we have to allow for each plot?

This depends on whether ashes are buried in caskets or poured into a hole in the ground. There are rules governing the size of caskets which mean that the minimum plot size for casket burials is 450mm x 300mm. If space is a premium it might be advisable to make a local rule stating that ashes can only be interred loose, directly into a small hole.

What are the practicalities of interring ashes from caskets?

It is important to allow sufficient depth for a burial in case room is required for a further burial above. It might be wise to 'top' the ashes with a thin sheet of plywood or similar biodegradable material in preparation for this eventuality. In any case, the top of the buried remains should be at least 300mm below ground level.

Do we need to keep a plan of burial of ashes?

Yes, as with full burials, ashes should be buried in plots according to a detailed accurate plan, kept with other burial records. This ensures that if there is a request for exhumation this can be properly carried out. Also, if further burials take place close to existing ones, buried ashes are less likely to be disturbed.

Will we be able to bury again in the same area once it is full?

Not at the moment. At the time of writing, legislation is awaited to permit further burials to take place at least 100 years after the original ones; this applies to both ashes and full burials. This is to ensure that the feelings of relatives are not hurt by the reuse of the land.

Do we need planning permission to create a Garden of Remembrance?

As well as the faculty, you will need planning permission (for change of use), if the churchyard is not already used for burials. Prior to the faculty petition, you should contact the Advisory Secretary at the Diocesan office as early as possible. For planning permission, contact your local planning authority at an early stage.

Are there general rules about what we will be allowed to do?

The general rules for the whole Diocese are set out in the Chancellor's Churchyard Regulations, which contain a section specifically on the burial of ashes. The Regulations are available from the Diocesan Office and can also be found as section C4 in the Diocesan Handbook. The most important rules are as follows:

- each scheme for a Garden of Remembrance must be authorised by faculty (except for small parishes provisions)
- in a Garden, no monument or vase may be introduced without the permission of the parish priest
- the faculty authorising the Garden will contain provisions about how burials are to be commemorated.

When we've done the thinking, what do we do next?

Once ideas have been discussed and an appropriate scheme is emerging, you will need to set your ideas out clearly in writing and drawings. These will be required for any planning application and faculty submission. For anything more than a simple grassed area, it's worth getting professional help from your church architect or from a landscape architect.

And finally....

It's worth remembering that the burial of human remains is always a sensitive issue. It is worth taking plenty of time in the planning of a Garden of Remembrance, particularly for initial discussions. There is no single scheme which will be appropriate for all situations, so it is always worth discussing alternative ideas with the Advisory Secretary at the earliest stage. Good, neat ideas will be encouraged!

Additional information and advice is available from the DAC team.

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Email: dac@stalbans.anglican.org

The Diocesan Registry:

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Tel: 0207 593 5015

Email: stalbansregistry@wslaw.co.uk

Extracts from the Guide to The Churchyard Regulations 2004

2.4 Materials for memorials

Natural materials only should be used, preferably those which are traditionally used in local buildings, e.g. stone, slate, or oak. The materials selected should be in sympathy with the colour and texture of the church building and its surroundings.

In any individual churchyard the parish priest has authority at his or her discretion to allow the types of stone listed below (underlined).

<u>Sandstones</u>	e.g. Forest of Dean, Serena (Italy), York
<u>Limestones</u>	e.g. Hopton Wood, Hornston, Nabresina (Italy), Portland
<u>Slates</u>	e.g. Welsh, Cumbrian
<u>Granites</u>	may be grey or red and should be: no lighter than honed Cornish and no darker than honed Rustenberg Grey
<u>Marble</u>	Dove Grey only

The finish should be non-reflective. For guidance, samples may be inspected at the Diocesan office.

3.4 Memorial Stones

Where memorial stones, incorporating vases if desired, are permitted by the faculty, these may be introduced with the permission of the parish priest. The stone:

- should be of a material permitted for memorial stones under the Regulations (see paragraph 2.4 above); and
- should be of the same size (maximum 300mm x 300mm (12" x 12")), colour and material as other memorial stones in the same Garden of Remembrance and should respect the character of the same Garden of Remembrance as a whole;
- should be flush with the turf and should not be covered with Perspex or other protective material;
- should not be placed in churchyard walls.

3.7 Archdeacon's Authority for small parishes

If:

- the parish in which the churchyard is situated has less than 600 persons on its Roll; and
- the parish priest and the PCC both agree that an application be made to the Archdeacon under this regulation; and
- the parish priest and the PCC are able to satisfy the Archdeacon that the number of burials of cremated remains does not average more than three each year during the previous three years:

the Archdeacon at his/her entire discretion may authorise a part of the churchyard to be set aside without the authority of a faculty.