

St Mary the Virgin, Wendens Ambo

Churchyard and Memorials Policy

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. In all these burial places, land has been used as the last resting place for the earthly remains of a person who has been laid to rest in sure and certain hope of resurrection to Eternal Life.



The churchyard at St Mary's in Wenden is particularly peaceful, set in a tranquil and picturesque part of the village. It is appreciated by many passing through on their way to the station as well members of the church family and community who have a personal connection with the place.

The Parochial Church Council, who have responsibility for looking after the church and its grounds, have agreed this policy to direct the decisions we have to make fulfilling our responsibility to maintain the churchyard and to give initial guidance to those who choose it as a final resting place for their loved ones or themselves.

There are clear legal requirements we have to meet in allowing burials and monuments in the churchyard and so these guidelines should be read in conjunction with the latest rules, to be found on the Diocese of Chelmsford website at www.chelmsford.anglican.org/chelmsford-registry-links

In the first instance, to avoid frustration and disappointment, any enquires for burials, interment of cremated remains or other matters concerning the churchyard should be made to the wardens or team vicar. Contact details can be found on the website <https://www.wendenheritage.org> or on the noticeboard in the porch.

Interments and Burials

There is a legal right for anyone

- who was a parishioner (ie a resident of the civil or ecclesiastical parish of Wendens Ambo) at the time of death, or
- who died in the parish, or
- whose name was at the date of death on the church electoral roll of the parish to be buried, or have his/her cremated remains interred, in the churchyard provided that the churchyard has space available and it has not been formally closed for burials.

Others without a legal right to be buried in the graveyard may be considered for burial or interment by the Incumbent and the PCC where there are strong personal, family or historical connections with the village.

Interments in the Memorial Garden: This is part of the churchyard opposite the porch on the south side selected by the Incumbent and the Parochial Church Council for the interment of cremated remains. It is consecrated ground set apart from other uses and dedicated to Almighty God. Cremated remains will be interred here and no longer in any other part of the churchyard except when they are interred in an existing grave. No individual headstones or plaques are permitted in the Memorial Garden.

Book of Remembrance: There is a Book of Remembrance in a special glass topped cabinet inside the church to record the names of people whose cremated remains have been interred or their bodies buried in the churchyard. (There is a fee charged to cover the cost of the calligrapher.)

Headstones: Churchyard rules have evolved over the centuries and, although exceptions may be seen in the design and materials of monuments in Wenden Churchyard, the Incumbent and PCC must ensure current rules are followed. These allow for headstones made of slate, some varieties of limestone and some varieties of sandstone. Application for a headstone should be made using form CR I which can be obtained from the Incumbent, the Rural Dean, most stonemasons, undertakers, the Diocesan Office or via the website: www.chelmsford.anglican.org/chelmsford-registry-links

Inscriptions: The words of the inscription are usually the most significant element of what appears on a headstone. However, some decoration is permissible provided it is kept in proportion. Because a memorial stone is an enduring record of the life of the person commemorated, the names and dates of birth and death must be formally written. The person's names are not allowed to be abbreviated but if he or she was usually known by a particular name then this name can be added in inverted commas after the Christian name. Simple, clear wording can be used to describe something of the character of the person and consistent with the Christian belief of life after death. Incised lettering is the longest lasting. The Churchyard Regulations give further guidance.

Other items of Commemoration in the Churchyard

Memorial vases and flowers may be permitted within the guidance of the regulations. Artificial and plastic flowers are **not** permitted, with a few exceptions, such as poppy wreaths for Remembrance, wreaths at Christmas, or at the anniversary of the death of the deceased. Although spring flowering bulbs can be planted, other flowers, plants or trees should not be.

From time to time, the PCC receives requests for other memorials. Two benches have been authorised and the PCC will carefully consider the balance of any further such memorials in the churchyard. Memorials other than headstones may require permission from the Diocese.

Environmental Concerns

The church grounds are a wonderful place to spend time in personal reflection and contemplation. There is a huge variety of and potential for diverse habitats on the land occupied by the churchyard. The PCC are seeking to actively encourage wildlife by working with the Pre-School and others to cultivate a wildlife area along the western boundary. Please contact the wardens or Incumbent for more information or if you have concerns.

Care of the Church Grounds

Looking after the churchyard generally is the responsibility of the PCC. Sometimes, maintenance work is contracted out but often it is the voluntary work of church members and the local community that keep up the maintenance of the churchyard. We hope and expect that families will do what they can to keep memorials and graves tidy. All rubbish should be taken away or deposited in the bin provided. Dead flowers can be added to the compost bins. We ask that Christmas wreaths be taken away by the end of January.

The cost of maintaining the churchyard, its flint boundary walls and trees is considerable, and your assistance is needed. If you wish to support the maintenance of the church grounds, in a practical way or by making a financial gift towards its upkeep, please speak to the wardens, PCC treasurer or Incumbent. We seek to be good stewards of the church and grounds and hope it will continue to be a place to enjoy and appreciate, for the current and future generations.

Wendens Ambo Parochial Church Council

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