

Churchyards and Cemetery Policy

The churchyard and cemetery of Holy Trinity, Bledlow and the churchyards of St Mary and St Nicholas, Saunderton and St Michael and All Angels, Horsenden are open for burials. The administration and maintenance of these burial grounds are the responsibility of the PCC, which is obliged to manage them under the Revised Churchyard Regulations of the Diocese of Oxford. This Policy is therefore in accordance with those regulations, available on the Diocese of Oxford website at:
<http://www.oxford.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Churchyard-Regulations-2016.pdf>

The PCC will endeavour to apply the regulations fairly.

The Right to Burial

All parishioners have a right to be buried in the churchyard or cemetery of their parish church, as do people who have died in the parish. The erection of a headstone or tablet over a grave remains a privilege. Bereaved families should note that the disinterment of human remains (including cremated remains) from consecrated ground for the purpose of reburial in another place is unlawful, unless it has been authorised by faculty. Such a faculty will not readily be granted.

Headstones and Tablets

The erection of any headstone or the laying of a tablet over a grave in a churchyard or cemetery is only possible with the authority of the Diocesan Chancellor, in the form of a faculty. In practice, however, the Chancellor has delegated this authority to the incumbent of the parish, who may grant permission on the Chancellor's behalf, within the prescribed limits of the Revised Churchyard Regulations of the Diocese of Oxford. Bereaved families who are content to choose headstones or tablets within these guidelines must complete the *Parish of Bledlow with Saunderton and Horsenden Churchyard Memorial or Ledger Agreement* form to obtain the written permission of the Team Vicar. Where a bereaved family wishes to erect a headstone or lay a tablet which falls outside the guidelines, they will be advised of their right to apply to the Diocesan Chancellor for a faculty. No headstone or tablet may be erected or laid until particulars of the material to be used, together with a drawing of its design and size, and the exact wording of the inscription, have been submitted to the Team Vicar and have been approved in writing. No monuments may be erected in the first six months because of the likelihood of settlement of the soil.

Upkeep of Graves

The churchyards and cemetery, and the graves within them, are the property of the church. The churchyards and cemetery are places of peace and beauty for everyone to enjoy. Graves may not be fenced or otherwise individually delineated; individual gardens, fencing or shrubs are not permitted, although the Team Vicar may permit the planting of a few bulbs or annuals. Cut flowers or wreaths may be left at the graveside or place of interment and must be removed when withered or decaying. Silk flowers, appropriate to the season, may be laid but must be removed when they deteriorate. No plastic flowers or wreaths are permitted, with the exception of Remembrance Day wreaths or poppies. With the permission of the Team Vicar, up to three toys or other ornaments may be left at the graveside or place of interment for a period of twelve months after the burial or interment, after which they must be removed.

The PCC hopes that bereaved families will understand its responsibility to uphold diocesan regulations and will cooperate with the PCC in abiding by them. Where breaches occur, the PCC reserves the right to take whatever action is necessary to rectify the matter e.g. the removal of fading flowers, ornaments, the uprooting of growing bushes etc., and, where appropriate and feasible, the PCC will take reasonable steps to give notice to the bereaved family concerned.