



**St Mary's Ewell**

[www.stmarysewell.com](http://www.stmarysewell.com)

# **Guide to Burial At St Mary's Ewell Churchyard**

**Version: May 2017**

*This guidance explains some of the rules and policies at St Mary's, Ewell, current open churchyard (sometimes called churchyard #4). We hope in most cases that recently bereaved families or those making plans for their own funeral will be able to talk through these matters with their funeral directors.*

## **1. Who can be buried in St Mary's churchyard?**

The right to be buried in the churchyard is mainly connected with where a person lives at the time of their death. We are also able to permit other burials, such as where a close family member (e.g. a spouse or parent) is already buried in our churchyard. Appendix I of this guide explains our policy, and the legal situation, in more detail.

## **2. What should I consider when deciding on where to arrange a burial?**

The Church of England's churchyards are very special places, and the churchyard of St Mary's Ewell is no exception. The churchyard is a holy place, consecrated by the Bishop. It is a beautiful and historic site, and it is managed and maintained in a way that keeps its special character.

Please be aware that special laws govern what can be done in a Church of England churchyard. A legal document called churchyard regulations is published. This means there is much less flexibility than in a cemetery or other burial ground. When making your decision, if you choose St Mary's churchyard, please be aware that these rules are in force and are part of what makes the

churchyard the special place that it is. We are happy to talk and explain more at any time, so please don't hesitate to be in touch.

### **3. What are the rules concerning monuments?**

No monument can be erected until legal permissions are granted in writing in advance and the necessary fees are paid. The fees are set nationally by the Church of England and Parliament.

The Vicar of Ewell is able to authorise in writing monuments (i.e. headstones) that fall within certain criteria in the churchyard regulations (see appendix II). For special reasons, other monuments can be authorized, but a lengthier "faculty permission" from the Consistory Court must be sought in this case. Funeral directors can help to talk you through the options, and the Vicar is also very happy to explain more.

Written permission is also needed for any subsequent additions or alterations to the inscriptions on monuments.

In the Garden of Remembrance, a specially reserved area of the churchyard which some people request for burial of ashes, no monuments of any kind are permitted according to the present rules.

### **4. What can be left at a grave site?**

Please be in touch with us at St Mary's through the parish office if you are thinking of doing anything at a grave site: involving monuments, plants, or anything else. That way we hope to help as much as we can and avoid misunderstanding at a later stage.

In short, the rule is that nothing can be left anywhere in the churchyard without permission, including on the grave spaces. In particular, shale or chippings, stones, photographs, and kerbs (whether stone, wooden, or pottery) are not permitted without faculty permission.

Shrubs may not be planted in grave spaces, as these grow and can cause damage to neighbouring graves.

We are happy for small plants and flowers to be left on the grave in the months following burial, or on special anniversaries.

St Mary's PCC reserves the right to remove any items from graves without notice, although we endeavour to contact families first where possible.

### **5. Is burial permanent?**

As part of our Christian belief, the Church of England operates its churchyards as places where we are finally laid to rest. Therefore the presumption is that burial

in consecrated ground is permanent. Exhumation can only take place with legal permission, and this is rarely granted in the case of a churchyard.

## **6. Are full burials and burial of ashes permitted?**

Different areas of the churchyard are used for full burials, and burial of ashes, so both are possible in our churchyard. Full burials and burial of ashes can take place in an existing grave, if there is room, with the consent of the family of those already buried.

To arrange a burial of ashes in our churchyard, please contact your funeral directors, who will be able to make the necessary arrangements.

Church belief is that “the burial of cremated remains should be seen as symbolic of our entrusting the person to God for resurrection” and for this reason the church does not permit burial of part of someone’s ashes, where other parts are given to relatives or buried or scattered elsewhere.

## **7. Can I choose the place of burial?**

Each burial takes place according to our plans for management of the churchyard. In exceptional cases, e.g. a desire to be near to the grave of a close family member, we may be able to divert from the plan in a particular instance.

## **8. How are monuments maintained?**

The maintenance of any monuments (i.e. headstones) remains the responsibility of those who erect them, or failing that the heirs of the person commemorated. It is their responsibility to ensure the ongoing safety of the monument. In cases where this has not been done, we have occasionally had to lay down monuments on their sides to prevent serious accidents. Our policy to this effect is available on our website. Modern monuments are now erected with safety in mind and we hope this will not be necessary in the future.

Please note that written permissions are required before any changes to monuments are made.

## **9. How is the churchyard generally maintained?**

The church and churchyard are maintained from donations, principally from members of our congregation and those who attend services. In addition, some church members volunteer to do work in the churchyard.

We place the highest priority on ensuring the churchyard is maintained to a high standard worthy of “God’s acre”. However, we do have only limited resources, and are always grateful for any donations towards this maintenance work.

## **10. Can grave spaces be reserved?**

It is possible to reserve a grave space in writing if a legal 'faculty permission' is granted by the Consistory Court. Please be in touch with us to find out more about this.

## **Appendix I: Rights of Burial**

The Church of England is divided into geographic parishes. People who are resident in the parish of St Mary's, Ewell, or who die in the parish, or who are on the electoral roll<sup>1</sup> of the parish, have the legal right of burial in the churchyard.

In addition, for historical reasons, these rights extend to the parish of All Saints', West Ewell, and to some streets in the parish of St Paul's, Howell Hill. Our current policy is to act as though these rights extend across the entire parish of St Paul's, Howell Hill.

You can get an idea of our parish boundaries from this web page:

<http://www.achurchnearyou.com/map.php?type=parish&id=170160>

If you would like clarification of the extent of parish boundaries, please contact us and we will be happy to help.

It is also our current policy to permit burial for those who moved out of the parish in order to move into a nursing home.

We are also happy to permit, where possible, the burial of people whose close family members (e.g. a spouse or parent) are already buried in our churchyard.

## **Appendix II: Churchyard Regulations**

At the time of writing, the latest churchyard regulations are the 2005 Diocese of Guildford Churchyard Regulations. These can be downloaded at

<http://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/assets/downloads/departments/dac/churchyardregulations.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> Church of England clergy are unable to join an electoral roll, but we will count clergy who have had an association with St Mary's as though they were on the electoral roll.