

St Katharine and St Hilda's Matson

January 2023

We are so sorry for the recent loss of your loved one. You and your family and friends are in our prayers. We are pleased that you are thinking of laying your loved one to rest in our churchyard. The church continues to be a place to find comfort at a time of loss and we hope that you know that the church is here for you, Please contact us if we can help and support you. You can find out how to contact us through our website, www.stkatharinematson.co.uk or through our social media pages.

Before you make any decision, it is important that you realise that a churchyard is different to a cemetery in that it is consecrated to God the Father Son and Holy Spirit. Churchyards are governed by the **Church of England 2020 Churchyard Regulations, Gloucester Diocese** that can be seen in full online. Just Google to find out more. Every church **must** follow these rules. Unfortunately we can't make many decisions at the local level.

Why are there regulations?

The graveyard is a sacred location to which many relatives and visitors make their way each year to find peace. To keep it this way, over the passage of the years, decades and centuries, we who are responsible at any given time have to ensure that it is a place of welcome and safety for all, especially for those volunteers and paid contractors that look after it. The cost of maintaining the churchyard is a considerable challenge and expense for most churches.

What are the regulations?

We have produced a summary of the regulations to help you.

Monuments in churchyards

You should approach either your funeral director or a stonemason and they will guide you through the process. Once you have decided what you would like they will check that it fits with the Churchyard Regulations and complete the Churchyard memorial form 2020 which you can find on the Diocese of Gloucester website - Churchyards The completed form is then sent to the vicar to be approved. If the application is accepted and the fee has been paid, the vicar will return the signed copy of the form and then the monument can be made. Don't do anything until you have received your signed form.

Please ask for fees for Burial and Committal of Ashes services

Please ask for fees for headstones and cremation stones.

All fees are reviewed at the beginning of each year. Please get in touch if finances are difficult. We do our best to make things as easy possible.

Why can't we erect a headstone for 6 months after a burial?

Graves take this time to settle, and the ground is unstable. This interval allows the family, or often families, to choose the wording acceptable to all members of the family (ies).

Why can we only have a natural stone headstone or unpolished grey granite, and not a black one ?

A grave is the property of the Parish Priest, and they can only authorise natural stone or unpolished grey granite. Anything else needs permission from the Diocese. They cannot authorise it

Why can't we put anything we like on the headstone ?

A churchyard is a Christian place, and reflects the principles of its faith and beliefs. We do our best to work with you and come up with a wonderful tribute to celebrate the life of your loved one.

Why are some churchyards not mowed all over, and left wild until August ?

It is a deliberate policy to encourage wild flowers to grow, and each year more and more primroses, daisies, snowdrops etc appear. Footpaths are created during the growing season by volunteer mowing to allow access to all areas of the churchyard.

Why are artificial flowers not allowed ?

They do not rot down. All the work in the churchyard is done by volunteers, and it is unfair to them to have to clear away faded or broken artificial flowers. Even real flowers look unsightly after a while, and it is expected that visitors to graves take home all old dead flowers. It is permissible to lay Remembrance Day poppies or Christmas wreaths on graves if removed after 2 months. We realise that flowers can be expensive so we are sympathetic to this issue. Please talk with us to find out more about this.

Why are toys and scarves etc not allowed on graves ?

For deceased children under 18 years of age, a suitable toy or tribute may be placed on their grave for 6 months after burial. Toys, scarves and other tribute do not last and don't create a restful space for other visitors.

Why aren't kerb stones and chippings allowed? There are some there already.

The ones already there date back to when the mowing was all done with hand tools or at a time when the church had no parish priest. New legislation and insurance policies make it compulsory that we follow all sensible rules to minimise risks. Stones and solid objects create an unacceptable risk of injury to both operators of machinery and any bystanders.

Who makes these rules ?

The rules are issued by the Church of England and the Diocese of Gloucester. This is not some unelected body, but has a Synod or Committee to govern all aspects of Churches in the County. The churchyard rules are the result of experience and input from every P.C.C. which are all composed of local elected members of every Parish Church.

Who can be buried or have their ashes interred in the churchyard?

Not everyone can be buried in a churchyard. There are rules that state who can be buried in the churchyard.

- (i) A Parishioner at the time of their death,
- (ii) (ii) someone who died in the Parish, and
- (iii) (iii) someone who was on the Church Electoral Roll at the time of their death.
- (iv) iv) Burial of a family member in an existing double-depth grave and modification of memorial if all relevant family in agreement and
- (v) v) Burial of someone with a strong family connection to the church or previous service at the church.

Membership of the Church of England is not a necessity to enjoy these rights. For cremations, ashes can only be interred in the Garden of Remembrance area, or into an existing grave.

Summary

We understand that this is a really difficult and painful time and want to work with you and care for you and your family. However these regulations have been carefully thought through, and it is the responsibility of the Parish Priest and Church Trustees (PCC) to uphold these rules. Please only go ahead with the interment if you are happy to follow them. If not, you may want to consider another site.

It's important to realise that these are regulations so the priest and the PCC have no choice but to uphold them. However we are committed to working closely with our families and will work with them to help create a fitting and special tribute that complies with regulations for their loved one.

We realise that there are monuments and tributes that don't comply with the 2020 regulations and are working gently with all involved to ensure that our graveyard remains a special and respectful space for our whole community whilst respecting the real tension that many families did not know that these tribute were not permitted.

Sadly if unauthorised items are not removed we will have to follow regulations, take advice and remove them for the family to pick up. We really don't want to do this, as it upsets us deeply and causes huge distress to grieving families. If you would like to create a space in your own garden for a tribute using items not permitted in the graveyard, the priest in charge or their team would be very happy to come and lead a short service free of charge.

Please don't make hasty decisions.

Please consult fully with us, your funeral director and your stonemason.

Please talk to your whole family before making decisions

We strongly advise that you follow regulations as any dispute that involves church legal authorities tends to be very expensive.

God bless you

The PCC of St Katharine's Matson

The Revd Sarah Todd

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