

# The Churchyard at St Mary's Bramshott



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## Information for Relatives and Visitors

October 2014

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## Introduction

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The churchyard at St Mary's Bramshott is a shared space valued by all residents of the parish, whether or not they are churchgoers, as a place of quiet and reflection. Anyone is welcome to come and enjoy the peace, the trees, the birdsong and the pleasant surroundings. However, most visitors come to honour and remember a beloved relative in the place where they have been laid to rest.

We understand the need of the bereaved to remember their loved one in a way that is meaningful for them. However, we need to balance this with the policy of the Diocese of Portsmouth, which is to preserve the essentially Christian and rural feel of the churchyard. Just as there are regulations covering what can be done to a listed building, there are regulations covering the types of memorial that are permitted and what is allowed to be placed on a grave, or in the churchyard. On a more practical level, we also need to manage the churchyard as efficiently and fairly as possible with limited resources, and this also places some restrictions on what can be permitted there.

We would therefore ask you to read this leaflet carefully, particularly before making any arrangements for a headstone, grave decoration or any other type of memorial – as a general rule you will need to obtain permission before proceeding. We understand that this can be a very difficult process for those who are grieving, and we would encourage you to contact us for further explanation if anything seems unclear or unfair, or if you have a query not covered in the leaflet.

## **Burial in the Churchyard at St Mary's Bramshott**

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The right to be buried at St Mary's Bramshott applies to all those resident in the parish. In addition, the vicar may grant permission for the burial of those with a long-standing parish or family connection even if they were not actually resident in the parish when they died. A fee is chargeable for burials, however this does not confer ownership of the plot, exclusive rights of burial (such as can be purchased from a local authority cemetery), or any right to erect a memorial.

### **Allocation of a Grave Space**

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As a church we need to manage the churchyard fairly and transparently for the benefit of all those who come to it. Part of this involves making the best possible use of the remaining space, so that as many people as possible in future can choose the churchyard as their final resting place (we currently estimate that there is space for the next forty years). Our policy is therefore that remains may only be buried in the existing plot of a relative (if appropriate and with the vicar's consent), or in the next sequential plot on the churchyard plan. Unfortunately we can no longer allow advance reservation of burial plots, either generally or in specific locations. In cases where a husband and wife wish to be buried next to each other we recommend that the surviving spouse instruct the funeral directors to prepare a double-depth plot so that they can be buried in the same plot when the time comes.

## **Churchyard Maintenance**

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The responsibility for maintenance of the churchyard lies with the Parochial Church Council (PCC), a committee made up of volunteers who have responsibility for a number of church matters, including balancing the annual budget. The PCC employs contractors to provide a basic level of maintenance - keeping the grass short and the general foliage under control, but is unable to afford the level of upkeep to individual graves that can be seen, for example, in the Canadian War Graves section. Financial constraints mean that the contractor cannot always get the grass cut in each section on their monthly visit. From time to time, therefore, particularly during a wet summer, certain sections of the churchyard may become overgrown, although we do always try to put this right as soon as possible.

Over and above this basic maintenance, relatives are extremely welcome to tend the grave of their loved one themselves, or to arrange for it to be tended, to the level they prefer, provided churchyard regulations are complied with (see below).

## **Memorials**

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Before any memorial is introduced to the churchyard, permission must be given in writing by the vicar and a fee paid. An application form is available from the Church Office which your chosen stonemason should complete with the proposed design and send to us. If the proposed design conforms to the standard regulations laid down by the Chancellor of the Diocese of Portsmouth, the vicar can usually sign and return it straight away. The stonemason can then go ahead with preparing and placing the memorial.

The Chancellor's Regulations cover a number of aspects of the memorial, including dimensions, permitted types of stone and the type of engraving that is allowed. It is very important to base the design on the regulations rather than a memorial that has been seen elsewhere in the churchyard, as some memorials in the churchyard depart from the regulations for various reasons. Most stonemasons are familiar with, and have copies of, the Chancellor's Regulations, but we can supply copies on request.

If the design you want departs significantly from the regulations the vicar cannot grant permission for it to be introduced into the churchyard. You have the option of applying for special permission (known as a faculty) directly from the Chancellor's Office, however please be aware that there is an extra fee payable for this and there is no guarantee that permission will be granted. If the proposed design differs from the regulations in a small way it is sometimes possible for permission to be given without going through the faculty process – please contact us to talk it through.

## **Benches**

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Benches, often with a commemorative plaque, can be a thoughtful way of remembering a loved one and, where space permits, we would usually welcome the introduction of a wooden bench. However, we need to be sure that the number of benches we have do not overcrowd parts of the churchyard, and that the responsibility for care and maintenance of the bench is carefully agreed. Assuming that a suitable location can be agreed, written permission would then need to be given in writing by the vicar before the bench could be placed. Please do contact us if you think you would like to explore this option.

## **Flowers**

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Many memorial designs contain an integral container for the placement of cut flowers. Where this is not the case, flowers should be placed in a removable container sunk into the ground. With regard to dead or faded flowers, we would prefer to leave the decision on when to remove them with the relatives, although we may have to remove them ourselves if the grave has clearly been untended for some time. With the exception of Remembrance Day poppies and Christmas wreaths, the Chancellor's Regulations do not permit artificial flowers in the churchyard.

## **Kerbstones, fencing, chipping and railings**

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These features make strimming and maintenance much harder, and can also impede access to other graves. We are therefore unable to give permission for these features.

## **Trees, Bushes, and Plants**

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With the exception of bulbs, we are unable to grant permission for anything to be planted directly into the soil of a grave. This is because many species can get out of control very quickly, particularly if the relatives cease to tend the grave. It is occasionally possible to have a tree planted elsewhere in the churchyard, but permission will be needed for this, so please do contact us before going ahead.

## **Other Decorations**

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Visitors to the churchyard will see that many relatives have chosen to decorate the graves with small moveable statues, flowerpots, windmills, chimes, etc. We understand that these items are special to those grieving and to their memories of their loved one. However, we should point out that the regulations do not actually permit the presence of any of these items.



## Fees

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Fees are set annually by the Archbishop's Council. Those for 2014 are as follows:

### Burial Fees

Funeral service in church	£164
Burial in the churchyard immediately before or after service	£269
Burial in churchyard on separate occasion	£295
Burial of cremated remains in churchyard	£142
Preparation & reinstatement of plot (if not done by funeral directors)	£100

### Memorials\*

Small wooden cross	£38
Vase, plaque or other marker for cremated remains	£64
Headstone	£121
Inscription on existing memorial	£22

*\* permission to place a memorial must be obtained in writing, please see page 5*

## Contact Us

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