

# **St Mary's Swainswick and All Saints Woolley**

## **CHURCHYARD RULES**

St Mary's Swainswick has two churchyards. The Lower Churchyard is legally closed and no new burials are allowed, other than of family members in existing plots. Bath & North East Somerset Council is responsible for maintenance.

The Upper Churchyard remains open for burials and is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and the Priest in Charge. The costs of mowing etc. are met through donations from our small congregation and a grant from Swainswick Parish Council.

All Saints' churchyard in Woolley is open but there are only a very few spaces left and these only for cremated remains. It is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council and is maintained by volunteers from the village.

We want to keep the churchyards as beautiful spaces – havens for both people and wildlife. From time to time volunteers tidy the churchyards and may remove things like old pots, non-biodegradable items or dead flowers and plants.

### **Burials and interment of ashes**

No burial or interment of ashes is allowed without permission from the Priest in Charge. Cremated remains should preferably be put into the ground without a box although a wooden or other biodegradable container is acceptable. Ashes may not be scattered in any of the churchyards.

### **Biodiversity**

We encourage biodiversity in the churchyards. To that end, some areas of the churchyards are allowed to grow wild and are cut once a year in the autumn.

### **Flowers and other displays**

The churchyard is strimmed regularly over the spring and summer and, whilst care is taken, plants and other displays may occasionally be damaged. We recommend planting spring bulbs which flower before the mowing season and placing any pots and vases against the headstone. All flowers, containers and other displays should be biodegradable.

### **Surrounds and chippings**

Some graves in the churchyard currently have 'surrounds' and stone or wood chippings. However, these are not allowed under the legal regulations governing churchyards and they also make mowing very much more difficult. Please do not put surrounds or chippings on graves as we may have to ask you to remove them.

## TOMBSTONES AND MONUMENTS

Below is a summary of the Churchyard regulations in relation to tombstones, monuments and memorial plaques. The full regulations can be found [here](#).

The introduction, alteration or reconstruction of any tombstone or other monument must be dealt with according to Churchyard Rules.

No tombstone or other memorial may be introduced without permission from the priest in charge. If the priest in charge is unsure whether permission can be given, they may refer a decision to the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

When permission for a tombstone or memorial is given it is for a period of up to 100 years as long as the tombstone or monument is kept in good repair.

An application for permission to erect a tombstone or monument must be made on the correct Diocesan form. Memorial Masons usually have access to these and will complete them.

Statutory fees are payable at the time of applying for permission.

The existence in churchyards of tombstones or monuments which do not comply with the rules cannot be regarded as a precedent.

Any memorial erected without permission may lead to legal proceedings through the church courts. These could result in the removal of the memorial at the expense of the person or persons responsible, who may also be required to pay the court costs.

The maintenance and upkeep of tombstones and monuments are the responsibility of the relatives and descendants of the deceased in perpetuity.

Small memorial plaques only are allowed over cremated remains, including on top of graves where cremated remains are interred subsequent to burials.

The following rules apply:

1. In the case of a headstone:-
  - (a) the height of the memorial above ground level is between 450mm and 1220mm;
  - (b) the width of the memorial is between 500mm and 915mm;
  - (c) the thickness of the memorial is between 75mm and 105mm (but the thickness of a slate memorial may be a minimum of 50mm);
  - (d) the upper edge of the memorial, within the above dimensions, is square or shaped in accordance with the diagrams approved by the Chancellor and kept by the Diocesan Registry;

- (e) the memorial is set into a pre-cast concrete shoe-type foundation which is set directly into the ground, or is attached to a horizontal base which is fixed to a foundation, and is in all respects compliant with British Standard BS8415:2018 "Memorials within burial grounds and memorial sites - Specification," or any similar standard that may replace it;
  - (f) the memorial may be to a specification adopted by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and erected by it or on its behalf.
2. In the case of a cross:-
    - (a) the height of the cross is between 750 and 1220mm above ground level;
    - (b) the width of the cross is between 500mm and 815mm
  3. In the case of horizontal ledgers over coffin burials:-
    - (a) the length is between 1200mm and 2100mm;
    - (b) the width is between 600mm and 900mm;
    - (c) the surface shall be just below the level of the turf.
  4. In the case of memorial plaques over cremated remains:-
    - (a) the dimensions are no more than 450mm by 400mm;
    - (b) the surface shall be just below the level of the turf.
  5. Vases shall be separate measuring not more than 300mm by 200mm by 200mm.
  6. Monuments may be of natural wood, slate or the following natural stones namely sandstone limestone and granite.
  7. The surface of the stone is matt, fine honed, honed, fine tooled, tooled or natural hewn (not polished or reflective).
  8. Blank and pearl granite, marble of any colour, synthetic or reconstituted stone and plastic shall not be used.
  9. A monument shall not include any raised kerb, railing, stone, or other chippings, picture or photograph, built-in vase container, statuary or bird bath.
  10. No colouring is permitted except black, white or gold.
  11. Inscriptions are factually accurate, concise, consistent with Christian doctrine and unlikely to be offensive or controversial for any reason. Any motif, emblem or other image forming part of the design is of a character commonly found in churchyard memorials or is relevant to the life of the person commemorated and is not inconsistent with Christian doctrine. Such image should not exceed 20% of the face of the stone.

12.No advertisement or trade mark is to be inscribed on the monument, except for a reference to the mason incised at the side or on the reverse of a headstone in uncoloured and unleaded letters no more than 15mm in height.

13.The memorial does not contain a QR code or any other device intended to enable direct communication with an electronic resource.#

Swainswick with Woolley Parochial Church Council  
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