

Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

Diocesan Advisory Committee



Planning for a new Cremated
Remains area

DRAFT GUIDANCE TO PCCs **Planning for a New Cremated Remains Area**

This guidance is issued by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) for St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. Its aim is to help PCCs think through the issues involved in planning for a new area for the interment of cremated remains in a consecrated churchyard so that the end result is suitable for the bereaved relatives and for the effective care of the site by the PCC. The conclusions reached will vary from PCC to PCC as there are many factors involved.

Please do consult the DAC in the early stages of such planning.

The Pastoral Ministry of the Church of England

“The pastoral task of the Christian Church, all the people of God, ministers and laity, is to provide company on the journey towards baptism, marriage, welcoming children and at death itself. This is the kind of company ... which in revealing the love of Christ will draw people to put their faith in him and to serve him in the fellowship of his Church until they come to their eternal home in the company of all the saints.” (Pastoral Services: Common Worship; CHP 2000)

For PCCs whose churchyards are open, provision of a suitable area for cremated remains is an important pastoral matter. The reminder that the Christian journey ends with an *‘eternal home in the company of all the saints’* helps us to recall both that the churchyard is not the final resting place of any person and that there is a communal aspect to Christian life in the present and for eternity. This communal aspect means that the requests relating to any individual have to be considered alongside the effect on the churchyard as a whole.

Your area for cremated remains will be important as a place for individual grieving and it will also have an impact on your churchyard as a whole; thus both its nature and its location will need to be carefully thought out. A factor to bear in mind is that a churchyard interment can offer a share of the quiet green space, a sense of belonging to the community and of being at one with the generations of worshippers whose memorials are present. These are difficult qualities to define but nonetheless precious.

Points to consider when planning a new area for cremated remains:

1) Issues of space

How much space is available (short, medium and long-term)?
How quickly might that space be used?
Answers to these questions will influence answers to sections 5 & 6

2) How will the area be delineated and how will it relate to the wider churchyard?

Will there be a low hedge or wall?
Can it be distinct but remain part of the overall burial space?
What arrangements will there be for seating for visitors?
Are there issues of access to consider?

3) How will the area be marked or signed?

For example, will there be a notice board or plaque of some kind to signify that this section is a ‘Garden of Remembrance’?

4) How will the area be maintained?

It is important to think through issues associated with mowing or strimming (see section 6).



5) How will remains be interred?

Possible options:

- a) Casket (biodegradable preferable)
- b) Ashes poured straight into the ground
- c) Columbarium

In cases (a), where a biodegradable casket is selected and (b) – this could be into marked and distinct spaces that are used once only or could be into a more general area and ‘re-used’. Decisions about this are likely to be influenced by available space, past practice and preferences of PCC members. One answer to shortage of space may be a columbarium, a wall or structure with niches in which ashes, in a suitable container, can be set and the niche sealed with a memorial tablet. Columbaria were used by many early Christian congregations, and often look rather like the interior of a dovecote - hence the name.

6) How will interments be marked or recorded?

Possible options:

- a) Memorial Stone or Tablet in accordance with the Churchyard Rules of the Diocese and in accordance with the Faculty granted for this particular area. The PCC will need to consider issues of total space available, of spaces between stones or tablets and of maintenance, especially if the ground is uneven.
- b) *Marked individual spaces with sunken vase holder but no stones or tablets.*
The PCC will need to consider issues of total space available, of spaces between vases and of maintenance, especially if the ground is uneven. Names might be recorded elsewhere – see below
- c) No marked individual spaces (only suitable for areas in which biodegradable caskets are used or where ashes are poured straight into the ground). Names might be recorded elsewhere – see below
- d) Common headstone to include all the names of those cremated
- e) Wall (terrace for uneven ground) with name plaques
- f) Obelisk
- g) Book of remembrance in the church – most suitable if the church is kept open
The PCC may wish to consider (d), (e), (f) and (g) especially if space is limited &/or the ground is uneven and difficult to mow or trim.

Other considerations

The PCC should be mindful of how the area would fit in with its surroundings and they should avoid selecting areas close to the church that might need to be disturbed at a later date (e.g. by scaffolding). The PCC should consider how to have some appropriate privacy and quietness and yet avoid isolation from the remaining churchyard and the sense of open space that this may have.



PCC Leaflet

After all the relevant decisions have been made and a faculty obtained, the PCC is strongly encouraged to produce its own leaflet setting out the policies and practices for this area. The leaflet should be suitable for the bereaved, funeral directors and monumental masons. Sample leaflets are available from the DAC.

Leaflets should include:

- Ways in which cremated remains can be interred (casket or not ; type of casket)
- Ways in which interments can be marked or recorded, including whether or not stones, tablets or vases are allowed
- Information on the use and care of vases and the leaving of flowers
(Please remember to refer to the Churchyard Rules)
- A statement to the effect that no-one actually ‘buys’ a plot but ‘buys into’ something that is owned by the parish as a whole.

Summary of Recommended Processes

- PCC recognizes the need to plan for a new area for the interment of cremated remains
- PCC has an initial discussion of the issues involved, this should include taking into account the views of other members of the congregation and the wider community
- PCC contacts the DAC with any queries and early draft proposals
- DAC may organise a site visit to give more advice
- PCC discusses further and makes firm proposals
- PCC writes a policy leaflet
- PCC applies for a faculty
- Faculty is granted
- Leaflet is distributed to Funeral Directors and Monumental Masons
- Leaflet is on hand to give out to bereaved relatives

Contact details for further information

The Venerable Jeanette Gosney
Mallard House, Office 13
The Street
Little Bealings,
Suffolk
IP13 6LT
Tel: 07710 479497 / archdeacon.jeanette@cofesuffolk.org

The Venerable Dr David Jenkins
Sudbury Lodge
Stanningfield Road
Great Whelneatham
Suffolk
IP30 0TL
Tel: 01284 386942 / archdeacon.david@cofesuffolk.org

Mr James Halsall
Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches and Pastoral Secretary
Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
St Nicholas Centre
4 Cutler Street
Ipswich
IP1 1UQ
Tel: 01473 298533 | 07702 079051 / james.halsall@cofesuffolk.org



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Front page centre: Sudbury All Saints. Front page clockwise from top left: Trimley St Mary; Lavenham St Peter & St Paul; Newton Green All Saints; Whitton St Mary & St Botolph.

