

CREATING A GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

Many churches, particularly those where the churchyard is closed, need somewhere to inter the cremated remains of parishioners. In such circumstances an area within the churchyard of the church can usually be set aside to create a **Garden of Remembrance**. It is not necessary to have a large area and it is probably as well to plan only for your anticipated needs for say 20 years. By then you will have more experience to anticipate the next 20 years requirements and to make a judgement on the expectations and demands of the public of that time rather than today, which may well be different from current expectations and demands.

If the proposed area is not already part of the burial ground, then early legal advice should be sought from the Diocesan Registry, 56, North Bondgate, Bishop Auckland, DL14 7PG, Tel: 01388 603073.

Having decided on the size of the space required you should seek out a part of the burial ground which is large enough and is accessible at all seasons of the year. It will preferably have nearby a dry hard standing for mourners. **You will need to be able to define the space physically with permanent markers or by reference to paths etc.** It is advisable to avoid areas under trees or where new trees could be planted. The area should be readily divisible into say 2' x 2' (600x600mm) plots, perhaps smaller if the individual plots are to remain unmarked.

A plan can now be drawn with each plot given a number/letter identity so that records can be maintained of each plot as it is used. This document will be held in the church safe until all the plots are used, when it would be deposited with other Parish Records in the Diocesan Record Office. A Book of Remembrance is required in addition to the requirement to register any burial of ashes. Entries should be made by a competent calligrapher.

If the PCC is convinced that **individual memorials** will be requested on each plot, then it is essential to lay down rules as to the material, colour and form of memorial, which will be permitted. Bearing in mind the close spacing of such memorials it is easy to understand that they will create a significant visual impact. It will also be understood that to permit anything other than flat ledger stones level with the turf (e.g. 9" (225mm) square) would create a cluttered appearance and make grass mowing so much more difficult and onerous. Where the Local Authority has the responsibility of care of the burial ground, this would be reason enough for it to object to the scheme. It should be remembered that ledger stones may become tripping hazards and the Parochial Church Council is under a legal duty of care to those visiting the Churchyard.

Similarly flower vases and fading **flowers** tend to create an untidy and un-cared for appearance. Naturalised bulbs are likely to be a better option. If floral tributes are to be permitted, you might consider creating a special area for them. Whether individual memorials are permitted or not, it may be helpful to denote the Garden by a stone or plaque with a legend such as "St John's Garden of Remembrance" or "Nearby are interred the cremated remains of Parishioners". Artificial flowers will not be permitted.

It might be helpful to provide a bench or **seat**, perhaps set on a paved area, with the Dedication Stone and floral tribute area close by, and the garden could be enhanced by sympathetic tree planting. The tree planting could perhaps screen a bin for dead flowers and other waste. However, do remember the future maintenance of the churchyard.

When there is a consensus between the parish and the DAC on the practical aspect of the proposal, the parish will be ready to seek legal consent and a faculty should be applied for in the usual way both in relation to the Garden of Remembrance and a Memorial Book.

Further advice is available from the DAC. An excellent reference is 'The Churchyards Handbook' 4th Edition, ISBN 978-0715143018. Guidance on all legal aspects should be sought from the Diocesan Registry.