

## **Gardens of Remembrance: Guidance for Parishes**

### **Defining the purpose**

Even before starting to make any plans, it's a good idea to get the PCC to think about the context of your Garden of Remembrance and list the various purposes that it should fulfil. For example it is likely that it should fulfil one or more of the following:

- A place of burial
- A pleasant garden
- A place for relatives and friends to come, to remember and reflect
- A part of the churchyard
- A place for reflecting the Christian message

### **Special local circumstances**

Your PCC members will have their own experience and views, but the following may also give them a start in identifying particular local issues:

- Do the families involved tend to be church members?
- Do the families tend to be local?
- What are the particular rules or practices governing other local churchyards, crematoria or local authority cemeteries?
- Is there a long-standing custom for a particular form of commemoration of burial of ashes?

### **And next.....**

Once you have agreed the general framework of ideas, you will need to see if a particular site is suitable, and then consider some more detailed questions:

### **The location**

- Is your proposed area large enough to meet projected needs?
- Is it away from trees and tree roots?
- Is it well drained or will we need new drainage?
- Will it be readily accessible for those attending interments and for subsequent visitors?
- Is there good access for the elderly and disabled?

### **Layout and access**

- Is there an existing path to the area, or will a new path be needed?
- Where will the path run and what materials will be used?
- Will the area be visually defined, e.g. by a wall or planting?
- Is an actual garden to be created or is the area to be grassed?
- Who will look after the area and what level of maintenance will be required?

### **Identifying the area**

You will probably want to inform visitors about the purpose for which the area has been set aside:

- What form will the notice take?
- What will be the most suitable position?
- What will be the most appropriate wording?

### **Dealing with flowers**

Visitors will often bring flowers and plants. You will need to allow for this in a communal way, which does not become untidy or interfere with maintenance. This could be:

- A paved or gravel area to one side
- A ledge around a central memorial
- A trough to support vases and pots etc.

Local practice should encourage fresh flowers as the symbol of the gift of creation and of the brevity of life. However, artificial flowers are not appropriate. The PCC may remove dead and artificial flowers to keep the Garden of Remembrance tidy.

## Methods of commemoration

The method of commemoration of the names of those whose cremated remains are interred in a garden of remembrance will vary according to local custom and may include:

Books of remembrance (bearing in mind access to the church)

- Vases
- A central memorial stone or cross
- Paths with engraved kerbs
- Memorial stones
- Wall with plaques

## FAQs

- Does the land have to be consecrated?  
Yes; a new area being set aside for the burial of ashes does need to be consecrated, although individual burials may sometimes be allowed by faculty in unconsecrated land. If the area is not consecrated, or you are uncertain of its status, you should contact the Diocesan Registrar as soon as possible so that the matter can be clarified and consecration arranged if required.
- Do ashes have to be buried in caskets?  
The Bishop has directed that ashes may either be buried in a suitable perishable or biodegradable container or buried loose in an appropriately sized hole in the ground. Ashes must be covered with soil. They may not be scattered or strewn.
- How much space do we have to allow for each plot?  
This depends on whether ashes are buried in caskets or poured into a hole in the ground. There are rules governing the size of caskets which mean that the minimum plot size for casket burials is 450mm x 300mm. If space is a premium it might be advisable to make a local rule stating that ashes can only be interred loose, directly into a small hole.
- What are the practicalities of interring ashes from caskets?  
It is important to allow sufficient depth for a burial in case room is required for a further burial above. It might be wise to 'top' the ashes with a thin sheet of plywood or similar biodegradable material in preparation for this eventuality. In any case, the top of the buried remains should be at least 300mm below ground level.
- Do we need to keep a plan of burial of ashes?  
Yes, as with full burials, ashes should be buried in plots according to a detailed accurate plan, kept with other burial records. This ensures that if there is a request for exhumation this can be properly carried out. Also, if further burials take place close to existing ones, buried ashes are less likely to be disturbed.
- Will we be able to bury again in the same area once it is full?  
Not at the moment. At the time of writing, legislation is awaited to permit further burials to take place at least 100 years after the original ones; this applies to both ashes and full burials. This is to ensure that the feelings of relatives are not hurt by the reuse of the land.
- Do we need planning permission to create a Garden of Remembrance?  
As well as the faculty, you will need planning permission (for change of use), if the churchyard is not already used for burials.
- When we've done the thinking, what do we do next?  
Once ideas have been discussed and an appropriate scheme is emerging, you will need to set your ideas out clearly in writing and drawings. These

will be required for any planning application and faculty submission. For anything more than a simple grassed area, it's worth getting professional help from your church architect or from a landscape architect.

- How do we apply for a faculty?  
Please apply using the [online faculty system](#) following the instructions in orange at the top of the application. Please ensure you upload as much information as possible to your application within the 'supporting documents and images' tab before submitting the application to the DAC. Information necessary varies depending on the work but is likely to include the following:-
  - Context photos of the whole churchyard
  - A plan of the churchyard indicating the proposed area to be designated as a GoR
  - Details of how remains are to be interred in the area (in an urn in marked plots or in a general strewing area)
  - If particular plots, how many will be provided, and give numbers of existing rate of interment
  - Details on how quickly any present designated area, or the churchyard, will be full
  - A specification of work and drawings illustrating routes and materials of any new paths, details of planting schemes etc, design of any structures to be incorporated
  - Full details of how it is proposed to record commemorations - including design and wording of any new memorials to be included
  - Supportive PCC Minute

### **Examples:**

Ewelme St Mary, where the individual memorials form part of the edging path around the area.





Marston St Nicholas, where the memorials are in a separate area set aside for cremated remains, and the garden of remembrance features several seating areas, a carved sculpture and planting scheme



Wotton Church (not in the Oxford diocese) opted for a fairly small, formal planting scheme

