



# St Mary's Catholic Church

## Harvington

### Churchyard Policy

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## Permission for burial or interment of ashes

- Whole-body burial or interment of cremated-remains/ashes in St Mary's Churchyard is reserved exclusively for practising Roman Catholic parishioners of St Mary's Parish, Harvington and for Roman Catholic Clergy and Religious with a previous connection to St Mary's Church and Parish.
- A practising Roman Catholic parishioner of St Mary's is defined as follows:

1. A baptised & confirmed Roman Catholic, living within the Parish boundary of St Mary's, Harvington, who attends Holy Mass regularly, or did so until infirmity/age prevented their attendance.

Or:

2. A baptised & confirmed Roman Catholic who regularly attends Holy Mass at St Mary's Catholic Church, Harvington, regardless of their domicile.

It will be for the Parish Priest to determine the minimum attendance required to qualify as '*regularly*'.

- Individuals who do not meet the above criteria and who wish their remains to be buried or interred in the churchyard may, on occasion, be given permission, but only in exceptional circumstances, and this will be entirely at the discretion of the Churchyard Committee and the Parish Priest.
- People with relatives buried in the Churchyard at St Mary's, Harvington who wish to have their mortal remains interred in an existing grave alongside their relative, may request permission from the Churchyard Committee. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld unless there is insufficient capacity remaining within the existing grave. This will depend on grave depth, numbers already buried and the date of the last burial. Alternatively, if whole-body burial is not possible, it may be permissible for ashes to be interred in the family grave. This will be entirely at the discretion of the Churchyard Committee and the Parish Priest.
- Permission for a non-Catholic spouse to be buried with a Catholic will not usually be withheld.
- Cremated-remains/ashes plots will continue to be made available until such time as the Churchyard Committee determines that all plots are full.

## Churchyard Rules & Regulations

- Whole-body burial plots and cremated-remains/ashes plots are laid out in designated areas, according to the churchyard plan determined by the Churchyard Committee. Each plot within the designated area may only be used for the appointed purpose in that area, i.e. burials are not permitted in the area designated for cremated-remains, and *vice versa*.

- All plots, of either type, shall be allocated sequentially as determined by the Churchyard Committee.
- A maximum of 3 coffins may be buried in a single whole-body grave.
- A maximum of 3 sets of cremated-remains may be interred in a single cremated-remains/ashes plot.
- The expenses required for the remediation of any damage to the churchyard caused by the digging or preparation of any grave shall be the responsibility of the family of the deceased or their funeral director.
- The dimensions of a burial plot will normally be a maximum of 7ft (220cm) long by 3ft 6ins (107cm) wide. Burial plots of larger dimensions may be permitted at the discretion of the Churchyard Committee and the Parish Priest.
- The dimensions of a plot for cremated-remains/ashes will normally be a maximum of 30ins (76cm) wide by 30ins (76cm) long.
- It is the nominated leaseholder's responsibility to ensure that the grave plot and its immediate surrounding area is kept well maintained and tidy. Dead flowers, ribbons, 'oasis' material etc. should be placed in the waste bin provided, in accordance with the signage in the churchyard.
- Any items left on the grave which do not conform to the churchyard regulations will be removed during the regular periods of routine maintenance of the churchyard.
- No grave mounds will be permitted in any section of the churchyard. Grave plots will be turfed at ground level as part of the general maintenance programme.
- Any mounds persisting for a period of more than two years following the burial/interment will be levelled and turfed.
- Dogs are permitted in the churchyard but must always be kept on a short lead and under close control.
- The parish reserves the right to layout and embellish the churchyard in such a manner as they see fit and, from time to time, improve it and keep the churchyard in good order and repair.

## Lease of the grave

- The reservation of burial and/or cremated-remains/ashes plots, *ante mortem* is strictly prohibited.
- Once burial/interment of the remains has been agreed with the committee and the parish priest, each plot will be leased to a named representative of the family of the deceased (the

leaseholder) for a period of 75-years, after which time the lease will revert to the management of the Churchyard Committee.

- The leaseholder and an authorised representative of the Churchyard Committee (or the Parish Priest) shall sign a written agreement to this effect.
- The leaseholder will be asked to nominate a legacy contact who agrees to accept responsibility for the lease if the leaseholder is no longer able to do so.
- The contact details of the leaseholder and the legacy contact will be kept in the Parish Register of Burials & Interments.
- During the period of the lease, the care and maintenance of the plot will remain the responsibility of the named leaseholder (or their legacy contact if appropriate).
- It is the responsibility of the family of the deceased to inform the Churchyard Committee of any change in the nominated leaseholder during the period of the lease.

## Fee Structure

The charges for leasing individual plots (w.e.f. August 2026) shall be as follows:

|                                                    |                |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| • Adult burial plot: 1 coffin depth                | £2,000.00      |
| • Adult burial plot: 2 coffin depth                | £2,250.00      |
| • Adult burial plot: 3 coffin depth                | £2,500.00      |
| • Baby burial or cremated remains plot             | Free of Charge |
| • Child (age 3-17) burial plot                     | £1,000.00      |
| • Cremated Remains Plot (single depth)             | £500.00        |
| • Cremated Remains Plot (double depth)             | £600.00        |
| • Cremated Remains Plot (triple depth)             | £700.00        |
| • Installation of New Permanent Headstone/Monument | £150           |
| • New Inscription on Existing Headstone/Monument   | £150           |

Fees will be updated annually by the Churchyard Committee and the Parish Priest in line with inflation and any necessary additional expenses.

*N.B. Responsibility for the digging and preparation of the grave, and any expenses generated thereby, shall remain the responsibility of the family of the deceased and/or the funeral director.*

## Headstones & Monuments

1. Given that modern headstones and monuments will be erected amongst those with historic provenance, it is essential that the sacred nature and dignity of St Mary's Churchyard be preserved. Prior permission must therefore be sought from the Churchyard Committee before the erection of any headstone or monument.
2. The design of headstones and monuments and the wording and lettering of any inscription must be submitted to the Churchyard Committee, in writing, for prior approval using the application form provided by the parish.
3. All new headstones or monuments and, where practicable, re-fixed headstones or monuments, are to be fixed in the cemetery in accordance with the code of working practice from the National Association of Memorial Masons.
4. It is required that a burial plot should be marked by either an inscribed headstone or cross. A small flower vase may be incorporated in the base of headstone or cross if required.
5. Headstones and monuments in the designated whole-body burial section of the churchyard shall not exceed 48 inches (122cm) in height and 36 inches (92cm) in width and shall be no less than 2 inches (5cm) in thickness. These maximum dimensions must include any supporting concrete base plate.
6. It is required that a plot for cremated-remains/ashes should be marked by either a small, inscribed headstone or flat/sloping tablet.
7. Headstones and monuments for cremated-remains/ashes plots shall not exceed 24 inches (61cm) in height and 18 inches (46cm) in width and shall not be less than 2 inches (5cm) in thickness. Flat/sloping tablets shall not exceed 24 inches (61cm) in width and 18 inches (46cm) in length.
8. It is required that all headstones and monuments be fixed in accordance with the recommendations of the National Association of Memorial Masons regarding the use of approved ground support systems.
9. The parish reserves the right to apply a small numerical identifier tag, in an unobtrusive position, to any headstones or monuments within the churchyard to maintain good and effective administration of the churchyard.
10. Temporary votive candles may be permitted on grave plots, but permanent candles/lanterns/lights are prohibited.
11. The following items are not permitted on grave plots: raised curbs, railings, plain or coloured chippings, gravestones in the shape of hearts, figures or open books; bird baths, plastic flowers, photographs, any kind of statuary, windmills or wind-chimes, free-standing vases or pots that

may blow over in the wind or any other mementoes that the Churchyard Committee does not consider to be in keeping with the sacred nature and dignity of the churchyard.

12. Bulbs or flowers must not be planted within the confines of any grave plot, and grave plots may not be cultivated as “gardens”.
13. Temporary markers are permitted to be placed at the head of the grave, whilst a permanent headstone or monument is being prepared for erection. Wooden crosses are the preferred temporary marker.
14. Floral tributes may be placed in a temporary vase at the base of the marker until such time as the permanent headstone or monument is erected.
15. Floral tributes or other authorised decorations are only permitted to be placed at the head of the grave. The Churchyard Committee reserves the right to remove any items placed elsewhere on the plot.
16. Any moveable objects placed on the base of the headstone or monument are placed there at the owner’s risk. The cemetery is open to the public and as such there is a possibility of theft and vandalism.
17. In accordance with Catholic teaching and funeral rites, the scattering of cremated-remains/ashes is not permitted under any circumstances.
18. All headstones or monuments shall be constructed from natural granite, marble or other hard stone, which must be durable and sound.
19. The size, materials and wording on each headstone or monument (including replacements) must be agreed in writing by the Churchyard Committee before installation using the application form provided by the parish.
20. The Churchyard Committee reserves the right to reject any headstone or monument which, in their opinion, is not of suitable quality, exceeds the permitted-maximum dimensions or is not in keeping with the sacred nature and dignity of the churchyard. No work should commence until the application has been approved and all fees have been paid.
21. Any headstone or monument erected in the churchyard remains the property and responsibility of the leaseholder and remains in the cemetery at their sole risk. All headstones or monuments must be kept in a good state of repair.
22. The Churchyard Committee is responsible for carrying out inspections of headstones and monuments. Any headstone or monument deemed to be unsafe will be tagged for the leaseholder to contact the committee. If the headstone or monument is, in the opinion of the

committee, in danger of falling it will be photographed before being laid flat on the burial plot and the nominated leaseholder will be informed.

23. When burials/interments take place, the surrounding headstones or monuments will be checked for safety. If their stability is in question the headstone or monument will be laid flat. This is in accordance with the Archdiocesan Burial Ground Management Guidance.
24. Due to the cost of headstones and monuments, it is advisable for leaseholders to arrange an appropriate level of insurance cover.
25. The parish will not accept liability for damage to any grave, headstone or monument or injury to a person within the cemetery except where such damage is directly attributable to the negligence of the parish and its workers.
26. It will be necessary for each written application for a grant of headstone or monument rights to be considered on an individual basis and compliance with other appropriate regulations will be a requirement.
27. Work on headstones or monuments will only be permitted in the churchyard during office hours (09.00 - 17.00hrs) and provided all fees have been paid. A minimum of twenty-four-hour prior notice must be given to the Parish Office before fixing or removing any headstone or monument.
28. The Parish reserves the right to remove a headstone or monument if for any reason the prescribed fees have not been paid. The grave owner will be advised sensitively of their responsibilities.
29. Regular health & safety checks are carried out on headstones and monuments and those requiring attention will be marked by the Churchyard Committee.

## Contact Details

For further information please contact:

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