

St Thomas Churchyard Stanningley - Guidance and Regulations

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1. Overview

The churchyard at St Thomas church, Stanningley is a beautiful and historically significant area to enjoy. There are some regulations that govern the activities of this resource, which are set by the diocesan chancellor, and by the parish. These regulations are for the benefit of others and for ourselves. Since they are legally binding, it is important to be aware of these regulations, and to adhere to them. Please note, when referring to 'plot holders', this means those people or families whose loved one has departed.

A full list of the regulations is included in [appendix 2](#) at the end of this document.

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2. The Environment of St Thomas Churchyard.

Whilst the churchyard contains over 5000 graves, there are in addition; interment plots for ashes, memorial markers, headstones, kerbs, and memorial tablets. There is a wide span of ages and conditions of each of these different features. Some features may have been installed in the mid nineteenth century, others within the last year. Care must be taken around every feature as they not only have significance (historically and aesthetically), but they are objects which may be a focus of grief. In addition, they may pose a physical risk to those who do not take care around them. Visitors are requested to monitor, control and clear up after, any children or animals in their charge. For health and safety reasons it is strictly not permissible to climb up any trees, stone memorials, walls and fences, or signs in the churchyard.

The paths are of varying quality. Please take care while using each of them.

Stone walls exist between different parts of the churchyard, but have been robbed of stone in some parts. This makes them more unstable than might be expected. Please take care around them.

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3. Use of the Churchyard

The churchyard is a place used by many people in different ways and for varying reasons.

3.1. A place to remember the departed.

There are many graves, plots and memorials that help people to remember those who have died. Reacting to the loss of a beloved one often takes time, and considerable energy, so can be draining for everyone affected by the death. Please look at Appendix 1 for a little more help if you are in this situation. When we mourn, we embark on a journey that helps us towards a healthy place of acceptance, but we each need to be alert to the needs of others, so that we might carefully help one another in our walk along the way.

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3.2. Natural Wildlife

The churchyard is semi wild, in that plants, birds, animals and insects live and traverse both the open areas, and the trees of the grassed yard.

Variously, owls, foxes, woodpeckers, nightingales, squirrels, dragonflies, deer, and badgers have been seen in the churchyard. The trees are of beauty and provide a haven for birds, insects and small mammals. [Return to Index](#)

Please take care of the environment. Refuse can seriously harm wildlife and damage our experience of the churchyard, so please dispose of your rubbish and waste responsibly. [Return to Index](#)

3.3. A Place of Reflection

People often enjoy and need, the chance of some quietness and solitude in a place of beauty. Stanningley Park provides such a place, but the churchyard is slightly different, in that it has a sacred and spiritual underpinning too. [Return to Index](#)

3.4. A Place to Walk

3.5. Many walkers and dog walkers choose to wander around the churchyard as part of their daily exercise. Please use caution on older uneven paths. Please remove any dog waste and keep your pets on leads. [Return to Index](#)

3.6. Access Route

Access to the church, and as a shortcut from Stanningley Road to the Norwood Estate is possible through the churchyard. We hope you enjoy your visit to the churchyard, albeit as you pass through. [Return to Index](#)

3.7. Research

It is possible to undertake historic and family research in the churchyard and through related resources elsewhere.

Stanningley parish burial records may be found online at; -

http://www.calverley.info/stthomas_bur.htm and a simple map of the area may be found by clicking [here](#). [Return to Index](#)

3.8. Family Enjoyment

We welcome those who enjoy a break or a picnic in the church grounds. Please ensure you remove any refuse when you leave, and care for the environment. [Return to Index](#)

3.9. Uniformed Groups, Church Groups, Children's Groups

Often the summer months see groups of children, young people and those from church using the less consecrated parts of the churchyard for barbecues, sports activities and fun. Please enjoy responsibly and carefully the church surrounds. [Return to Index](#)

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3.10. Schools

There are five schools within Stanningley who are always welcome to access the church and its environs. To arrange a visit or a tour contact the vicar.

To email the minister click [here](#).

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4. Care of the Churchyard and Safety

Maintenance of the churchyard, in the main is undertaken by kind and dedicated unpaid volunteers. The cutting of the grass is reliant upon both people and machinery and at times, the mower or the people may not be as available as we would wish. The church is conscious of the need to cut short vegetation around the church, but we have to live within financial and material constraints. Our profound thanks go to all those who help with this intimidating task. If you wish to make a donation to the maintenance of the churchyard please contact the vicar.

To email the minister to make a donation or to make a suggestion please click [here](#).

Occasionally reviews and risk assessments are carried out around the churchyard, to ensure the ongoing safety of monuments and other features, but it is asked that special care is taken when walking across the grave areas and near monuments. The ground surfaces around grave plots often suffer subsidence, making it easy to fall over on or near them. **Any stone feature is very heavy and therefore potentially poses a risk to those who stand near it. Please ensure that you keep those with you safe, especially children.**

It remains the right of the church to act where necessary so that headstones, memorials and other features may be removed or made safe, where appropriate maintenance has not been possible by plot holders or their families. [Return to Index](#)

5. Notes for Those who have Responsibility for Burial and Interment Plots

It is the responsibility of those families who have arranged burials and interments in the churchyard, to maintain these plots in a manner commensurate with the regulations of diocesan chancellor and also the parochial church council. [Return to Index](#)

A relevant list of these rules are included in **appendix 2**.

Especially, when looking after plots and monuments please ensure you are fully aware and compliant with the regulations over allowed and disallowed ways to care for that which you maintain. [Return to Index](#)

6. Improvements in the churchyard?

We may find something that we would like improved in the churchyard. Some aspects cannot easily be altered, due to cost, or history, or ownership especially since others may like the features that we don't like. However as far as possible the church council will try to improve the area and will bear in mind your comments.

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To email the vicar with your suggestions, click [here](#). [Return to Index](#)

7. Differences between a Churchyard and a Public Cemetery.

Like churchyards, civic cemeteries are places of burial for the mortal remains of those who have died. In the last twenty to thirty years, the practice of remembering loved ones by placing tokens, cards, models, angels, books, pictures, windmills and lights, has become widespread. This is allowed within public cemeteries, but perhaps surprisingly is **disallowed** within churchyards.

Amid the difficulty and pain of loss it is often felt that our own personal grief and the way we remember the departed is emotionally, so important to express in **our own way**. Yet we are also people who feel loss together as a community, and the manner of our mourning must appreciate the needs of others too.

Counter intuitively, the churchyard is not *just* a place for the buried, and burials. Although Stanningley churchyard is clearly still active for interments, and is a place of mourning, yet it is also a place of sacredness, of reflection, of historic importance, and where wilderness and wildlife can be enjoyed. There will be people, who hold that the churchyard is only for burials, or that they should have freedom to do as they wish within the churchyard. This is not the case, and it is the church who legally owns the plots in the burial areas. Everyone who uses the churchyard must ensure that they have due consideration for all others. Any serious breach of this mutual consideration may require action and negotiation from the diocese to aid resolve it.

The Chancellor has created a set of regulations which set out in detail, the manner that parishioners are allowed and disallowed to use plots in the churchyard. These include a set of close guidelines as to what may and may not be legitimate additions to plots. Some of these regulations are set out in Appendix 2, later in this document. These rules are written for legitimate reasons which we do not in our grief always readily see. As an example, we may feel that a particular interment plot would look better with an edging of small stones, especially as other people may have put stones around their plots. The chancellor's rules disallow this, and the actions of others does not legitimise actions we might choose to take. We might feel the rules are wrong. However, there are compelling reasons to adhere to the rules, some of which affect those who maintain the churchyard, and also for aesthetic reasons which include a need for some uniformity.

If someone does not adhere to these or any other regulations in the churchyard, then others may be affected or may lose out. The chancellor has indicated that as these regulations are enforceable by law, it is important to abide by them. [Return to Index](#)

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7.1. Can items such as cherubs, angels, stones, artificial flowers on graves or interment plots?

The churchyard is sacred ground; land set aside for Christian burial and for Christian worship. It might seem that by putting these items on the grave, we are doing something to remember our loved one. We may think of our dear departed as 'still with us', and so we desire to give them things to make them laugh, or to comfort them, or to give them peace.

There are several reasons for not placing items above on a grave in a *churchyard*. The person who has died is now at peace, in the care of God, and although their remains are physically present in the churchyard, the life and essence of the person is not.

Special comfort is needed for those who are left behind. Indeed 'letting go' of those we love might seem the wrong thing to do, however we cannot fully come to terms with our loss if we don't to some extent manage to do this.

This doesn't mean that we will forget our loved ones in any way – yet we have to begin to live in our reality without them. We can rightly have a grave or interment plot and care for it, but as we do so, we begin to be able to remember with less sadness the life of our relatives, rather than be imprisoned by their loss.

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8. Are Churchyard Burials Permitted?

The churchyard no longer has facility for new burial plots. Despite this, interments and burials may be considered in existing plots for family members. All burial and interment plots remain the property of the church, although tablets, monuments, flowers etc. are the property of bereaved families.

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9. Are Churchyard Interment of Ashes Permitted?

Currently you may arrange for an interment of ashes service for a loved one who has died and has been cremated. A fee is chargeable (Payable to St Thomas Stanningley PCC), and covers any legal aspects, a license to place a tablet if you wish one, a plot and a short mandatory service.

Please contact the vicar for more details, the costs, and to arrange for an interment.

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Appendix 1

Dealing with a death

1. Coping with a death - Mourning

There are no easy words of comfort for someone who has lost a beloved friend or a family member. The world is not as it should be.

Maybe you have recently suffered a painful bereavement?

Perhaps you feel that sometimes nothing can ever help.

Unfortunately there are no quick fixes. But there are, one or two steps that even now can be cautiously taken, that for some people will get them back on more of an even keel emotionally.

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2. Coping with death - Recognising how grief comes out.

There are five stages to coming to terms with a death, or in fact any kind of grief at a loss.

denial,
anger,
bargaining,
depression
acceptance

It would be wrong to see these stages as somehow ‘one after the other’. They can occur all at once or in any order. Often, we might have a recurrence of feelings we thought had passed, such as *anger* and *denial*, even as we struggle to *bargain* amid the great sorrow we feel even as we gradually *accept* the loss of our loved one.

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3. Coping with death - Talking with people

People can gather comfort from being with close family or maybe friends, so that it's possible to talk about the loss you feel. This can help the feeling come out. People often say that they don't want to talk about their loved one because they are afraid of showing emotions in front of other people. We pain inside us like in an abscess. You see its not just what someone does for you that leaves you with happy memories, its also the things that you suddenly remember that they did to you that hurt and that you can never now get an apology for. And then you remember the things you did to them – and that you can never apologise to them over.

Sometimes the abscess has to be lanced for the pain to come out and it can be an unpleasant messy affair. But that's where our belief in God – the great doctor, the great healer, the comforter, the one who forgives. That's where our

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faith in God becomes **real**, not because it was somehow false before; its simply we need God so much more right now - at this kind of time.

But maybe we might be 'lucky'. Maybe we are one of those who just don't get emotional, and who seem to just deal with everything 'in our stride'. We also have to be on our guard because we have to be especially caring towards those who have different ways of expressing their grief.

The second reason to be cautious is that "every one grieves". There is a danger that if we don't outwardly express, or even feel, the emotions that might be expected from loss then we become rather like a pressure cooker building up steam, but with no safety release valve. Eventually we explode, usually at the people we love the most and for reasons that they, and we, cannot understand.

sometimes its not quite like that. Sometimes is much simpler – sometimes its just a matter of realising the truth that they are gone – and then handling it.

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The bible has some pointers to the way that God wants to restore the world. The book of Revelation chapter 21 says

^{3b} 'See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;*

⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.'

It's clear that there won't be a need for violence when this restoration of the earth happens.

² In days to come, the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains,

and shall be raised above the hills;

all the nations shall stream to it.

³ Many peoples shall come and say,

'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

to the house of the God of Jacob;

that he may teach us his ways

and that we may walk in his paths.'

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,

and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between the nations,

and shall arbitrate for many peoples;

they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,

and their spears into pruning-hooks;

nation shall not lift up sword against nation,

neither shall they learn war any more.

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Appendix 2 Chancellors General Directives (Simplified), Jan 2018

1. Introductory Notes

- 1.1. Incumbents and priests-in-charge are temporary custodians not merely of the church building but also, where there is one, of its burial ground. Responsibility for its care and maintenance rests with the PCC. Churchyards are an important feature of both rural and urban communities: an historic record of successive generations, a home for funerary monuments of architectural and aesthetic excellence, a setting for the church itself (many of which are listed buildings), and a place for reflection and prayer. Churchyards are consecrated and set apart for sacred use, and therefore different in their nature from municipal cemeteries.
- 1.2. Parishioners, those named on the electoral roll, and those dying within the parish all have a legal right of burial in the parochial burial ground. This right is not restricted to the baptised nor to members of the worshipping community. Thus the clergy are brought into direct contact with relatives of deceased parishioners in circumstances of extreme distress and often in a highly charged environment. Whilst this provides a valuable opportunity for ministry and outreach it can also create pastoral challenges.
- 1.3. It is essential that the bereaved understand the meaning and consequences of burial in consecrated ground. The nature of the rite of burial is to say 'farewell' to the deceased and to commend them to the mercy and love of God in Christ and to await the transformation of resurrection. There is accordingly a theological finality to all interments, including those of cremated remains, in ground consecrated according to the rites of the Church of England. This is inconsistent with the concept of portability of remains and the future prospect of exhumation.
- 1.4. The bereaved must understand that by seeking a burial in consecrated ground, they are submitting to the jurisdiction of the Consistory Court which regulates the type of headstone or other marker which may be erected. This jurisdiction exists for reasons which are in part theological and in part aesthetic, since what may be unobjectionable in a municipal cemetery might be considered inappropriate in an historic churchyard. It is the responsibility of the clergy to bring these matters to the attention of the bereaved at the earliest opportunity, and to inform them of these matters. [Return to Index](#)

2. Authority of parish clergy

- 2.1. It is unlawful for a headstone to be introduced into a churchyard without permission. For administrative convenience and to minimise expense, the Chancellor by this written Instrument delegates to parochial clergy the authority to permit the introduction of a monument provided it is of a type which complies with the detailed provisions which follow. During a vacancy, or in the absence of a priest-in-charge, this delegated authority is exercised by the area dean.

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3. Guidance on the operation of these Regulations

Inscriptions

3.1. Photographs or representations of objects or motifs such as a child's toy are not permitted nor is the use of 'pet names'. Bronze or ceramic inserts are not to be used. Badges, crests or emblems may be used provided they are seemly and appropriate for the deceased. Any representation will need to be designed so that it may be accurately cut by a skilled craftsman. Masons' or carpenters' names, signs or marks may be inscribed on any monument provided their position and appearance are unobtrusive having regard to the monument as a whole. Incised lettering may be painted in gold, silver, matt white, matt black or matt grey. Plastic inserted lettering is not permitted. [Return to Index](#)

Position

3.2. No memorial may be erected within 3 metres of the outer wall of the church building save by authority of a faculty. [Return to Index](#)

Fixture

3.3. Regard must be had to health and safety concerns, and to current industry standards for the fixing of monuments safely and securely. [Return to Index](#)

Crosses

3.4. An incumbent may NOT consent to the introduction of a cross. Such monuments require a high standard of design. However, the incumbent may authorise the temporary introduction of a simple wooden cross no more than 12 inches in height to mark a recent burial. Such cross must be removed upon the erection of a stone memorial or after a period of 18 months, whichever be the sooner. [Return to Index](#)

Prohibitions

4. For the avoidance of doubt, the following are not permitted:

- 4.1. kerbs, railings, fencing, chippings, pebbles and similar materials, and free-standing vases. These create difficulty or danger when mowing;
- 4.2. memorials in the shape of vases, hearts, open books;
- 4.3. memorials incorporating photographs or portraits;
- 4.4. mementoes, windmills, toys or little animals, solar lamps or similar;
- 4.5. the use of 'pet names'
- 4.6. artificial flowers.

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Commonwealth War Graves

5. Graves of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are marked by memorial headstones of a distinctive design and size, indicating their particular significance. The incumbent may authorise the erection of these headstones where applicable.
6. The incumbent is authorised to permit the installation of discreet signage provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission denoting the presence in the churchyard or burial ground of one or more Commission graves. The following conditions however must first be met:
 - 6.1. The installation of the sign has been the subject of an affirmative PCC resolution;
 - 6.2. The sign is of a standard design previously recommended by the DAC or adapted to the requirements of a particular location on the advice of the DAC;
 - 6.3. The dimensions and location of the sign have the consent of the Archdeacon who may seek the advice of the DAC as the circumstances require.

Important Notes

1. The Incumbent has no authority to permit the erection of a memorial which does not comply with these Regulations. Any non-compliant memorial (whether or not the incumbent has purported to give his or her authority) may be removed by order of the consistory court.
2. A faculty may be sought for the erection of a memorial which does not comply with these Regulations. Such petitions are actively encouraged. Each case will be considered on its individual merits and the views and policies of the Incumbent and PCC will be taken into account. The opinion of the DAC will also be sought.
3. Parishes may seek a faculty for bespoke Regulations for use in a particular churchyard. Such Regulations should take into account local practice, tradition and custom and the particular environmental, architectural and aesthetic considerations of the church and its setting. They are likely to be more readily enforceable if the parish has a sense of 'ownership'. The provisions of these Regulations should be incorporated unless the parish can satisfy that chancellor that it is appropriate for a faculty to be granted which sanctions a specific variation.
4. Where there is ambiguity as to whether a proposal comes within the incumbent's delegated authority, or where the incumbent is favourably disposed to the introduction of a headstone which may be just outside its scope, an application may be made by the incumbent to the Chancellor for the delegated authority to be extended so as to permit the proposal. Such applications will be considered on their merits on a case by case basis.

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