THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND SUFFOLK

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE



Many parishes like to be able to offer in their churchyard the option of interment for cremated remains as well as for burials.

This is usually done by setting aside a part of the churchyard as a Garden of Remembrance.

1 Stage one

If you'd like to do this, you and your PCC will first need to obtain the consent of your parish priest. Before you start making any definite plans, you need to be clear about your reasons for doing it such as what, primarily, do you want to achieve?

- A place of burial
- A pleasant garden
- A place for relatives and friends to come to pay their respects
- A place for reflecting the Christian message of hope and eternal life
- All of these?

Everyone will have their own experience and views, which should be discussed with the incumbent. The burial of human remains is always a sensitive issue and it's worth taking time over the planning.

It's important to consider how you commemorate interments. One way of doing this is to put up a central memorial or cross to all of them, with a Book of Remembrance and plan of the Garden inside your church to record whose remains have been interred where.

Alternatively, each interment could be commemorated with a stone plaque in the ground or fixed to a wall.

2 Stage two

When you have started to form your ideas, contact the DAC office and begin the process of applying for a faculty.

A site visit can be arranged to offer you help and guidance.

There is no single scheme which will be appropriate for all situations, so be open-minded and prepared to look at alternative suggestions when the DAC gets involved.

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Location and design

Here are some questions to help you decide whether your proposed site is suitable and how to manage it.

- At the current rate of interments, how many years' capacity will the Garden have? Will this be sufficient?
- Is the site well away from trees? Their roots will make it difficult to dig holes for interments and they will shed leaves over the Garden in autumn.
- Will the Garden be easy to find for those attending interments and for subsequent visitors?
- Is there an existing path to the area?
- Does it provide level access for the elderly and disabled?
- If you need to lay a new path, where will it run and what materials will be used?
- How will the Garden be visually defined? Will you use planting or a different surface or a boundary wall?
- Will there be a central cross or memorial?
- Who will look after the Garden?
- What level of maintenance will be required to keep it looking tidy?
- If you decide to place a Book of Remembrance inside your church, will the building be kept open during the day so that mourners can view it?
- Will you permit plaques for individual interments? If so, what will the dimensions and preferred form of inscription be? It's really important to have a clear point of reference in case any disagreements arise.
- If you want to put up a notice to explain why the area has been set aside, then what form will it take, where will it go, and what will be the most appropriate wording?
- Is your churchyard closed and looked after by the parish or district council? If so, it will be responsible for upkeep of the Garden of Remembrance and it's important to get its agreement.
- It's desirable that the Garden shouldn't introduce any complications to maintenance tasks eg memorial plaques that are flush with the ground tend to be preferred because mowers can pass over them.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Does the land have to be consecrated?
Yes - a new area set aside for the burial of ashes does need to be consecrated. If the area is not consecrated, or you are uncertain of its status, you should contact the DAC to clarify the matter and arrange for consecration if required.

Do ashes have to be buried in caskets?
Ashes may either be buried in a suitable perishable/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.

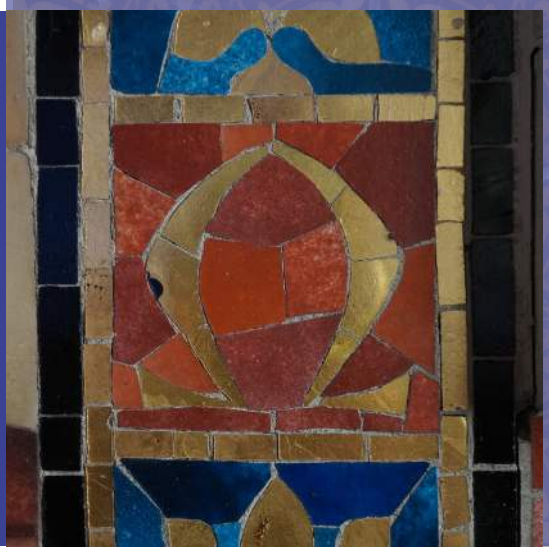
What are the practicalities of interring ashes in caskets?
It is important to allow sufficient depth for a burial in case room is needed for a further burial above. The top of the buried remains should be at least 300mm below ground level.

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.

Do we need planning permission to create a Garden of Remembrance?
You will need planning permission for a change of use if the churchyard is not already used for burials. You may also need planning permission for any structures that you plan to erect. Contact your local planning authority at an early stage to check.

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Flowers

Visitors will often bring flowers and plants to commemorate loved ones.

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 or a ledge around a central memorial.

It's good to encourage leaving fresh flowers as a symbol of the gift of Creation and of the brevity of life.

Some Incumbents allow artificial flowers to be left from time to time.

Either way, maintenance needs to include taking away dead flowers and decaying artificial flowers to keep the Garden tidy.

Rose bushes and shrubs commemorating the deceased cannot be planted on individual plots, so you might want to consider setting aside a special area for this.