

## God's Acre

This is the ancient name given to churchyards belonging to parish churches. It comes from the fact that the land enclosed for burial has been consecrated to God and, therefore, belongs to Him. Thus plots within it cannot be bought and do not belong to families whose members are buried in them. However, it is the right of every parishioner to be interred in the churchyard.

In this churchyard, burial plots and the memorials erected on them are governed by precise and strict rules laid down by the Diocese of Gloucester and Woodchester PCC. They are designed to ensure that the churchyard is environmentally sensitive and capable of easy maintenance in the long term. Each churchyard should be harmonious in appearance and should form a worthy setting for the church in its midst. A churchyard is not a private place in which anything is acceptable but rather a place where many people have a shared interest in its appearance. Please note that the following are the current rules to be observed.

## Burials

### Grave site

1. The site of a new grave will be directed by the Rector. Although, as explained, this does not belong to the family whose member is buried there, the family is responsible for the upkeep of the grave.
2. After the burial the ground has to settle and is likely to subside. As a consequence you will need to fill in and replenish the top soil.
3. The surface of the grave plot must be turfed or planted, and kerbing should not be above ground level. Covering with stones and other decorative material, including gravel, is **not** permitted.
4. Wreaths and cut flowers may be placed on a grave but should be removed as soon as they have withered. Artificial flowers are not allowed except for Remembrance Day poppies and Christmas wreaths, both of which should be removed after a reasonable time.

5. Only flowers and other compostable plant matter should be put in the rubbish bay. Please put **all** other materials in the black dustbin - wreath frames and wire of all kinds, oasis bases and loose blocks, plastic, cellophane, plant pots and containers, etc. - or help to keep the area tidy by taking your rubbish away with you to dispose of at home.

### Memorials following burials

1. There is no automatic right to erect a memorial in the churchyard.
2. A minimum of 6 months should elapse between the death of the person to be commemorated and the application to erect a memorial as the ground needs to settle firmly. This is particularly so here in the churchyard at Woodchester because of its heavy clay soil.
3. If you wish to erect a memorial contact the funeral director or a stonemason direct who will submit a full description of the proposed work to the Rector. No agreement with a funeral director or stonemason or other contractor should be entered into until permission has been granted by the Rector.
4. Advice can always be sought from the Rector and his permission must be obtained or, where necessary, he will advise how to apply for a faculty from the Diocesan Chancellor (fee chargeable).

### Size of memorial

The Rector may approve headstones up to the following dimensions above ground:

Height	3'0" (914.4 mm)
Width	22" (558.8 mm)
Thickness	3" (76.2 mm)

A memorial may be any dimension within these given limits.

## Erection

The base of the memorial may be shaped so that it can be inserted directly into the ground at sufficient depth to ensure stability.

Alternatively, a headstone may stand on a stone base, provided that it does not project above ground level. It must be an integral part of the design and must not project more than 4" beyond the headstone in any direction.

## Materials

A memorial should be made of natural local stone, such as Cotswold Limestone, unpolished with no reflecting surface, or stone similar in colour and texture, or of hardwood.

## Epitaphs

Inscriptions should be incised or in relief. Plastic or other applied lettering is not permitted. Take care in selecting the wording. An imaginative approach is encouraged but excessive sentimentality is to be avoided. Advice can always be sought from the Rector. Any subsequent alteration to the wording must be separately approved.

If the Rector is unsure about any aspect of a proposed memorial he will seek advice from the appropriate Diocesan authority.

## Interment of Ashes

**Memorials** following interment of ashes

A simple plaque may be mounted on a stone base and laid flush with ground level or an upright memorial may be approved by the Rector, in both instances, up to the following dimensions:

Height	18"	(457.2 mm)
Width	12"	(304.8 mm)
Thickness	2"	(50.8 mm)

See also Diocese of Gloucester Churchyard Regulations 2020  
The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Woodchester, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 5PD  
March 2021.



# A guide to burials in the churchyard of the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Woodchester, Gloucestershire

Please keep this leaflet for reference