

Graveyard Burial Policy: St Nicholas Church, Studland



1. Introduction

This policy has been compiled from a number of sources, listed in the appendix below, to provide clarity on eligibility for coffin burials and the interment of cremated remains within the graveyard of St Nicholas Church. Also, it provides other useful information about burials and memorials in the graveyard. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Parochial Church Council.

2. Eligibility for Burial

The following individuals have a legal right to be buried in St Nicholas graveyard:

- **Residents of the parish**
- **Individuals whose names are on the church electoral roll**
- **Those who die within the parish boundaries**

Additionally, the **Incumbent (Team Rector)** has the discretion to allow others to be buried, subject to consultation with the **Associate Minister** and the **Churchwardens**. Families who do not have a legal right of burial can approach the Incumbent and/or Associate Minister about the interment of their relative. However, they will need to provide **a strong case** for consideration of their request. A strong case could include previous residence of the deceased within the parish or Team boundaries. Having many holidays in the area, regular day visits to Studland or just liking St Nicholas graveyard would not be sufficient grounds alone for allowing a burial to proceed.

3. Cremated Remains

The same eligibility rules apply to cremated remains. Occasionally permission is given for cremated remains to be interred within an existing grave that contained either a coffin or cremated remains. The parish does not permit the scattering of ashes. Ashes must be interred within biodegradable casket or box preferably, or carefully poured into the allocated grave.

3. Grave Space Reservation

The Parish does not reserve graves. This is to ensure fairness for future burials. A burial plot will be assigned by the incumbent, Associate Minister or Churchwarden.

4. Burial Procedure

Before a coffin burial or interment of cremated remains, a suitable service will be arranged with the officiating minister, the family of the deceased and usually the Funeral Director. Relevant certificates will be retained by the parish and placed in our records. The burial will be recorded in the church's burial register and the St Nicholas Graveyard map will be updated.

In the case of both coffin burials and burial of cremated remains, it is possible that the graves can contain the remains of up to two individuals. If the family wishes this for new graves, it

must be communicated to the minister and Funeral Director, as double depth plots have to be prepared.

5. Memorials and Headstones

All memorials must comply with **Diocesan Churchyard Memorial Regulations**. These are drawn up centrally by Church of England (see below). There is no automatic right to a memorial and permission must be granted by the Incumbent. This permission is normally sought in conjunction with a memorial mason, who will offer advice to the applicant, knows the rules regarding size, materials and inscriptions and will seek the permission for the memorial. There is a small fee for the application process. In very rare circumstances, local approval may not be given due to non-compliance with the regulations or the minister not being content with what is proposed. In these situations, the applicant has a right to apply for a faculty from the Diocesan Chancellor, though every effort would be made to avoid the expense and delay involved in this course of action.

6. Exhumation

The interment of human remains is considered final. Exhumation is only permitted in exceptional circumstances and requires legal and ecclesiastical approval.

7. Maintenance and Conduct

Families are encouraged to maintain graves respectfully. St Nicholas PCC reserves the right to remove items that contravene regulations or affect the dignity of the churchyard.

References

- [1] [New burials and memorials - The Church of England](#) (please note the parish has exercised some local rights (e.g. not permitting the reservation of grave plots).
- [2] Diocese of Salisbury general guidance on Churchyard matters, guidance for families on churchyard matters, Churchyard Regulations and Handbook for the Bereaved are found at: <https://www.salisbury.anglican.org/supportforparishes/care-of-church-buildings-and-churchyards/>

Review History

Version 1 – adopted by St Nicholas PCC on xx January 2026