

THE JOINT COUNCIL OF HOLY TRINITY AND ST JAMES'

CHURCHYARD AND GRAVESTONE POLICY

The following policy was agreed at the Joint Church Council (JCC) meeting held on 23.07.2024.

1. This gravestone policy is the responsibility of the JCC and changes to it must be approved by JCC.

2. Background

The St James' graveyard is actively managed by the JCC in line with the recommendations of the Worcester Diocese. New burials occur and a process exists for controlling the size, shape, colour, and materials of memorials. Burials only occur with the permission of the Vicar and Churchwardens. Memorials relating to the burial of ashes have their own regulations.

The graveyard is split into three major areas. The one on the North side (NS) of the church is where burials currently occur. This is a sloping site but most of the old memorials have been removed and new memorials are being installed. The upper site on the South side (USS) is also steeply sloping and contains many older memorials and these should be regularly checked and may need remedial action then. It also contains the new area for interring ashes. The lower site of the South side (LSS) is largely flat but contains many complicated and tightly spaced memorials, some in a poor state of repair. There are other areas in which the memorials include marble crosses and the ironwork joining the various pieces has corroded causing the marble to split. Such memorials should be regularly checked and may need remedial action then.

An up-to-date map of the churchyard and all burials has been produced for January 2021. Some of the graves are easily encroached on by the surrounding hedges, but regular hedge-trimming is containing this.

3. Policy

It is the policy of the JCC that access to the graveyard shall be maintained as a safe and pleasant environment for the friends and relatives of the departed. Although maintenance of the graves and memorials is the responsibility of the family of the departed, in many

cases this responsibility is no longer undertaken. Under those circumstances the JCC will take whatever action is justified to maintain the churchyard as a safe environment. To this end the JCC reserves the right to dismantle and remove any memorial deemed to jeopardise the safety of anybody using the churchyard for legitimate purposes. Generally, such action will require an appropriate faculty to be sought from Worcester Diocese.

4. Looking to the future

The JCC will abide by any regulations brought in by Worcester Diocese to control the erection and maintenance of memorials and the reopening of graves for further burials.

5. The Orchard and the Spout

With the financial help of the Friends of St James's Church the area to the south of the Lower Graveyard has been cleared, the trees shading it to the south removed and local varieties of apple and plum trees planted. Much help has been given by Worcestershire Countryside Department, West Malvern Tree Wardens, and volunteers in the village. This area, known also as the Jubilee Orchard, is intended for the foreseeable future as a facility open to the community of West Malvern. The spring or "spout" was refurbished and landscaped with finance from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Both Orchard and Spout need to be managed and maintained, under the supervision of the Churchwardens. They are also responsible for managing refuse, dustbins and refuse collections by the Local Authority.

6. The use of poisons and herbicides is to be avoided.

7. General churchyard policy

Regular inspections of the churchyard and memorials, (including the cattle grid at St James') are to be undertaken by the Churchwardens or as delegated by them.

All steps and paths in the churchyard to be regularly inspected to reduce as far as is reasonably practicable the risk of slip, trips, and falls. The main paths to the church should be gritted when icy.

Incumbent: Revd Rebecca Elliott