



## **St James Church Taxal**

### **Whaley Bridge Parish, Diocese of Chester**

#### **Graveyard Guidelines**

St James Taxal's churchyard is consecrated ground, providing a tranquil setting where friends and relatives can remember the deceased in a quiet prayerful environment. It is set in the wonderful countryside of the Goyt Valley. St James Church has been a place of Christian worship for nine hundred years and continues to be an active community of faith.

Both the church and its churchyard are of great heritage value. We aim to manage our churchyard sensitively to preserve and enhance this part of our Christian heritage and hand it on for future generations to enjoy. We aim to cherish this living landscape by encouraging wildlife and ecological sustainability.

The churchyard falls within the Peak District National Park and is subject to Conservation Area status.

#### **Who does the churchyard belong to?**

The churchyard (or graveyard) is the property of the church. Whaley Bridge Parish is responsible for its maintenance and upkeep, which is undertaken by volunteers. We want it to be a place that is used, enjoyed and respected by our local community. When families purchase a memorial stone they sometimes mistakenly believe they are purchasing the grave – that is not in fact the case. Because the land belongs to the church, written permission from the Vicar is needed for burials and for the introduction of any memorial stone.

#### **Who can be buried here?**

All residents of the Parish are entitled to be buried in the graveyard, subject to the permission of the Vicar, and we accept applications from others with a significant connection to the church. Ashes can be committed to an existing grave space and a memorial added to the headstone once permission for any changes has been given. All ashes are committed to the earth. The burial of caskets is no longer permitted for reasons of sustainability.

## **Should I choose this graveyard?**

Our graveyard provides a peaceful resting place in a lovely setting in consecrated ground. It is maintained in accordance with legal guidelines from the Church of England, setting out how it should be managed and the type of memorials allowed. This is to ensure churchyards reflect the Christian faith and remain peaceful, dignified and respectful places, welcoming to all. Many of the features allowed in local authority cemeteries are not permitted in our graveyard: ornaments, toys, wind chimes, plastic flowers etc. If it is important to you to leave such things on a grave, then you should think about seeking advice from your Funeral Director about other burial sites available.

## **What permissions do I need for a memorial stone?**

No memorial can be erected in the graveyard without the written permission of the Vicar. The church has the right to apply to remove any memorial erected without approval.

## **Headstones and gravespaces**

Headstones must be traditional in shape, conform to the Diocese of Chester regulations and be approved in writing by the Vicar. The Diocese of Chester regulations can be found online [chester.anglican.org/support-services/churches/churchyards/churchyard-regulations-2007.php](http://chester.anglican.org/support-services/churches/churchyards/churchyard-regulations-2007.php) or obtained from the Vicar. Please discuss these with your Funeral Director before you make your choice. It is essential that you don't order a stone from a stonemason before you have received permission, as this could result in you losing money if your chosen design is subsequently not approved.

Kerbs, railings, and any kind of fencing around the grave are not permitted and planting on graves should be low level only and in keeping with the rural nature of the graveyard. The planting of trees or bushes is not permitted.

## **What about flowers on graves?**

In order to maintain a green environment that benefits wildlife, we ask that no plastic flowers or ornamentations are left on graves. Our preference is for natural flowers, but good quality silk flowers are an acceptable alternative – they should be in keeping with the season.

Christmas wreaths may be left, but should be removed by Mothering Sunday – ie early/mid March

As part of regular graveyard upkeep, we reserve the right to remove flowers that are dead, or silk flowers that have become ragged and unsightly.

No musical or noise-making or other ornaments are permitted.

## **War Graves**

There are a number of war graves sited at various places in the churchyard. Details of these can be obtained from the Vicar.

## **Churchyard Maintenance**

Maintenance of the churchyard is kept at a level that allows easy access to graves, but at the same time protects the habitat of the graveyard. It is important the maintenance team are able to mow and trim around graves. Two donkeys form a much-loved part of our maintenance team, keeping the grass in check during summer months! If you would like to help to look after the graveyard on an occasional or regular basis we would love to hear from you.

## **Health and Safety**

In the interests of health and safety we ask that:

All memorial stones are erected to conform to the most recent edition of the National Association of Memorial Mason's Recommended Code of Working Practice.

Work shall not commence until a minimum of 6 months after an interment to allow the ground to settle.

The Parochial Church Council ( PCC) reserves the right to lay down any gravestones that are identified as being unsafe, but will take all steps possible to contact relatives before taking any action in order to allow the family to make the necessary repairs.

## **Visitors**

You are very welcome to visit the church and the graveyard. However, all visitors are responsible for their own safety, and should conduct themselves in a manner that shows respect to the deceased, their families and other visitors, the church and local residents.

Children should not be allowed in the churchyard unattended.

## **What should I do next?**

If you have any queries, or wish to arrange a funeral, burial or committal of ashes please the Vicar, Revd Frances Eccleston, who will be happy to help you. Tel: 01663 732724 / 07969 776070 or email [revfrances.whaley@gmail.com](mailto:revfrances.whaley@gmail.com)