



The Parishes of St Michael's Horton And St Andrew's Wraysbury

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Dear Horton Residents

NEWS FROM HORTON CHURCHYARD

Up at St Michael's we think it's time to take you into our confidence and share with you some of the burdens as well as the joys of looking after our ancient churchyard.

There always seems to be somebody in our churchyard at any time of day. I often find you busy cleaning, tidying, trimming and generally caring for it. St Michael's is very grateful to everyone who does so much to maintain our churchyard as a holy place of rest and peace. In particular I would like to thank Mr Mattie Doe who is a regular sight on his ride on mower and to his son Mr Terry Doe and his strimming team for their excellent work keeping the grass down. If anyone wants to join the team we can pass on your details to Mr Doe.

However we are facing a few issues that are giving us headaches. I am looking to you for your help and co-operation with these matters too.

Lack of space

Our biggest issue is that we are running out of space. In a very few years we will have no room for new burials at all, though for some further time we will be able to continue to bury family members with their spouses or parents if there is enough space left in an existing grave. The consequences are:

- We must make the maximum use of the little space we have left. We cannot accept oversize graves, oversize coffins, vaults, or oversize memorial stones. All of these deprive somebody else of the chance to be buried at St Michael's. We need to keep every plot within a boundary of 78" x 30"
- We can't accept any more burials of people who do not live in the parish. We used to take burials of people who formerly lived in the parish but now that we are down to our last few spaces this is no longer practical. An exception may be made for people who attend our church and go on to St Michael's roll of members.
- We may need to place new graves close to your family grave. I am sorry if this may restrict your access but the alternative is to close the churchyard.

Benches

We cannot take any extra furniture such as benches. These deny other people grave spaces. Either benches are put on somebody else's grave (they don't all have gravestones, not everybody could afford them) or they are on an empty space, which is worse because we need to use that space for someone else. Either way we

cannot accept benches and unfortunately will be forced to remove any more that appear without permission in order to be able to use the churchyard for the purpose it is there for, that is, to provide burial spaces for the residents of Horton.

Churchyard regulations

New churchyard regulations have come into force this year. The regulations require that nothing is brought into any churchyard without permission from the vicar. This has in fact always been the case but new regs give me a chance to bring this to your attention. So may I point out that, just as I am not allowed to come into your garden and do whatever I like, so you are not allowed to come on to the church's land and do whatever you like. A burial does not change the fact that St Michael's is the owner of all the land in the churchyard and you need our permission for any permanent object brought there.

- The grant of permission will depend on the management needs of the churchyard, including keeping plots to a regulation size as above.
- Permission will also depend on whether proposals are in keeping with the character of the churchyard. As far as the extension to the churchyard is concerned, my predecessors have already allowed a wide variety of memorials in different colours and forms and it is too late for me to pursue a different policy.
- However the rest of the churchyard is another story. It is of great antiquity with many monuments which are hundreds of years old, all quarried from local stone. Only monuments in keeping with these traditions can be allowed. No permission will be given for kerbs, vases, ornaments etc which obstruct the maintenance of the churchyard.
- St Michael's will be happy to give you a copy of the churchyard regulations upon request.

Walls

The walls surrounding the churchyard are very ancient and are listed as being of historical interest. Please do not fix anything to them.

Your support

I do realise that what has been written above will not be popular with everyone. However I hope that a few minutes thought will commend these steps to you. In particular the issue of conserving space for future burial places benefits everybody. I hope you will give us your vigilance and support in restraining people who want to persist with excesses however many times we tell them that they are being unfair to others. In the end, it's just about being good neighbours, isn't it. If you have any questions or comments I'd be delighted to meet you and discuss them.

So let's work together, church and community, to make the best of our churchyard and hopefully we will be able to find space for your family and neighbours for a few more years.

God bless you,

