

## **A few words from the Vicar ....**

What a blessing it is to have a well-kept churchyard. Many thanks to the churchyard team who, rain or shine, turn out on Wednesday mornings and the occasional Saturday to cut the grass, keep the churchyard tidy and undertake a few odd jobs around the place.

Likewise, my thanks go to the rest of you who give up some of you time to support the mission of this Church. This month, however, I shall focus upon the churchyard.

For me, ignoring for a moment the noisy intrusion of some of the heavy vehicles using Church Street, the churchyard is a place of tranquillity. I know others also find this to be true and I am sure this is a comfort to those who come to visit and tend the graves of loved ones.

All are welcome to wander in, take a seat and sit awhile, or simply just wander around. There are certainly some interesting gravestones to be discovered. Just be a bit careful though; the old, flat gravestones can sometimes be slippery!

Of course, the churchyard is a place of Christian burial. As such, like all churchyards, it is consecrated ground reflecting the sure and certain hope that those buried within it await the return of Jesus Christ, and the life that is to come.

In my experience, folk sense this and always act appropriately.

Because the churchyard is consecrated ground, legally it falls under the jurisdiction of the Bishop, exercised through the Chancellor (the ecclesiastical judge for the Diocese). From time to time, the Chancellor issues regulations regarding the management of churchyards, and we are obliged to comply with them.

There are strict rules, for example, about the design of headstones permitted in the churchyard. Furthermore, nobody can install one or add an inscription to one without permission.

Likewise, there are legal restrictions in force regarding the items that may be placed on graves. From my wanderings around the churchyard I have noticed a few instances of non-compliance. This leads me to suspect that some folk are unaware of the restrictions in force. Therefore, for everyone's benefit, permit me to outline these for you.

Freshly cut flowers are allowed, as are Christmas and Poppy wreaths in season. It is also permissible to plant bulbs and flowers (but not flowering shrubs or bushes).

The following are prohibited:

- Artificial flowers;
- Shrubs, bushes and trees;
- Lighting of any kind;
- Toys, photographs, balloons, and other sentimental items (including seasonal decorations).
- Kerbs, railings, fencing or chippings.

The Church has the legal right to remove offending items from graves, and will do so. But, obviously, it is far better if folk remove non-compliant items themselves. So, if this applies to you, please do so.

So, we have a beautiful churchyard. Whether or not you have loved ones buried here, come in and enjoy the tranquillity.

And, by the way, the churchyard team are always looking for new recruits! They are a great bunch and, if you need an additional incentive to sign up, they always down tools halfway through the morning for tea and some delicious cake!

Every Blessing

*Dave*