

ST LEONARD'S CHURCHYARD¹

1. General:

The responsibility for the care and maintenance of St Leonard's churchyard is vested in the incumbent and the Parochial Church Council (PCC). Until 1985 it was cared for (maintained) by the church. At that time the incumbent (Peter Ridley) and the PCC entered into an agreement with the local Parish Council whereby the council would maintain the churchyard and St. Leonard's would provide the funds to do so. Last year the Parish Council advised us that the original agreement was not valid and that they would hand back responsibility for maintenance to St. Leonard's at the end of September 2009. This has now been done although there are still a few issues that need to be agreed and/or resolved. Additionally, the churchyard is running out of space for future graves.



3. Maintenance:

Previously St. Leonard's have passed on to the Council all, or most, of the income derived from burials in the churchyard. In turn, the council have maintained the churchyard, mowing the grass and generally keeping it in good order. In handing over the maintenance to the church the council have "donated" the maintenance equipment to St. Leonard's. Fortunately the 2 men who were employed by the council to carry out the maintenance have agreed to continue to do so. St. Leonard's will be responsible for their fees and for all necessary related costs.

4. Burial Plots:

You may be aware that we are rapidly running out of burial plots. In the event of a churchyard becoming full it is, apparently, legally the responsibility of the Parish Council to provide a suitable alternative. St. Leonard's have been working with the Council in an attempt to find additional land preferably adjacent to the present churchyard or elsewhere in or near Eynsham. Unfortunately no-one has been able to find any available land. While we still hope that some land may be forthcoming, we are also considering what other options we may have and have been in discussions with the Diocese on this matter. One option is to close the churchyard, at least to further burials, while accepting memorials for cremated remains.

In the meantime we are carrying out a survey of the churchyard to establish how many plots are still available. A number of the unused plots have been "reserved" but St. Leonard's is no longer accepting reservations.

5. Memorials and Monuments:

It is the responsibility of the deceased's family to look after their family monuments and memorials. However, if the family lose interest or move away, the responsibility passes to the church. The problem then is that, in accordance with current Health and Safety legislation, the monument has to be maintained in a safe condition. In January 2009 the Ministry of Justice issued a document "Managing the safety of Burial Ground Memorials". It gives practical advice on how to check, test and deal with unstable monuments. It is not particularly complicated, but it does require that we do something to comply with the recommendations to ensure that we cannot be accused of negligence should someone be injured in the churchyard.

¹ Extract from [Report and Accounts](#) for the Annual General Meeting of the Parochial Church Council 2009 held on Sunday 18 April 2010 – this report by Bill Middleton