



MEMORIALS IN CHURCHYARDS

recommended are Forest of Dean, Hornton Blue, Ketton, Nabrasina/Roman Stone, Portland, and York (limestones), Northumberland (sandstone), and Welsh Black and Westmorland Green slates. No coloured or mottled granites are permitted, nor any granite darker than Karin grey, nor marble, synthetic stone, nor plastics. Although the stone may not be polished nor finished in any way to produce a reflecting surface, it may be suitably prepared for an inscription.

Designs: Your Priest may not authorise memorials in the shape of a heart or a book, nor photographs, portraits, kerbs, railings, chippings or glass shades. A Priest may normally give permission for motifs and pictures only if they are of Christian significance.

Inscriptions: These should be simple and reverent, and preferably of Christian significance. They should be incised or in relief, and may be painted.

Commemoration after cremation: These rules apply (as appropriate) to memorial slabs for cremated remains. In an area set aside for this purpose, any memorials must be of the same dimensions.

Finally –

These Regulations are designed to enable you in most cases to have a worthy memorial to the person you love without having to go to the trouble and expense of having to seek a Faculty from the Chancellor.

This document was authorised in 2004 by officers of the Diocese of Ely

Every human being experiences bereavement, and that includes your local priest and church members. The Church therefore has a real understanding of, and sympathy with, the grieving process that all of us go through when experiencing bereavement.

In this context, a Churchyard memorial is very significant. It is important therefore to make sure that every memorial erected in a churchyard meets a family's needs. Yet at the same time we have to think of the needs of other families, who will have loved ones buried nearby; of the needs of the local church, on whom the upkeep of the churchyard usually falls; and on the needs of generations to come, who will be looking at the memorial long after today's bereaved people are themselves dead.

Bereaved people are sometimes under the impression that they have actually bought the plot of land in which their loved one is buried. This is not so; they are simply paying for the work involved in the burial itself, and for a small part of the cost of the general maintenance of the churchyard. The whole churchyard remains in Church ownership. It is also worth noting that the right of a parishioner to burial in the local churchyard does not also automatically give the right to erect a memorial except by separate permission.

Permission must therefore always be sought for the erection of any memorial. This may be gained only from the Chancellor of the Diocese (he is the senior legal officer).

However, he delegates to the local Priest the power to authorise simple memorials (as outlined later in this leaflet). If someone wishes to erect a memorial which falls outside the local Priest's delegated powers, he or she will have to apply to the Chancellor for permission to do so, by applying for a 'Faculty'; but it will usually have to be demonstrated that there is some substantial reason for the Chancellor to give his permission.

It is important to note that the existence in a churchyard of a similar memorial to the one desired will not usually be a reason for the Chancellor to grant permission. For example, the existence of older kerbs in a churchyard will not be a reason for the Chancellor to give permission for another one; once immediate relatives of the deceased leave the area or themselves die, the burden of tending the grave falls directly on the local church, which will find the task more straightforward if there are no kerbs.

Reasons for the Regulations

Churchyard Regulations (and they are very similar right across the country) are in some respects different from those which govern civil cemeteries. This is partly because of the different settings of the two types of graveyard. A memorial which might be quite suitable in an urban cemetery may well look quite out of place when close to an historic and ancient church building. The Chancellor has not only to consider the wishes of a bereaved family, but his responsibility for the maintenance of an appropriate setting for a parish church for the next 200 years or more.

How do you go about erecting a memorial?

1. At an early stage, and before talking to a Monumental Mason to choose any design or material, you should talk to your Priest; this will help to avoid difficulties later in the process.

2. Then you need to decide whether to ask a Letter-cutter to create an individual memorial, or to approach a firm of Monumental Masons to produce one of a more standard design from a catalogue.
3. Once the memorial is agreed in principle, you should then make application to the Priest on the form available for this purpose.
4. If the proposed memorial falls within the Priest's delegated powers (see next section), permission can be given straight away.
5. If the proposed memorial falls outside a priest's delegated powers, you will have to apply to the Chancellor for a 'Faculty' to gain permission. This will cost rather more. Your Priest will be able to give you advice on how to apply for this Faculty.

What memorials may a local Priest give permission for?

This summary does not cover every detail of what your Priest may give permission for. The full and legally-binding rules are in a document called 'Churchyard Regulations'. A Priest may authorise simple headstones, crosses, or ledgers (plain memorials laid flat), subject to the following:

Size: in general, headstones should be roughly 900mm x 700mm x 100mm, but there are maximum and minimum dimensions to this. A base is allowed, as long as it does not extend more than 100mm beyond the headstone; the base may include a recess for flowers.

Flowers: no artificial flowers are allowed in Churchyards, except for Remembrance Day poppies and Christmas wreaths, which must be removed within two months; the local church has authority to remove them after that time. Trees and shrubs may not be planted without separate permission.

Materials: Headstones may be made of teak or oak, or cast or wrought iron, or natural stone, and shall not be polished or have any reflecting finish. Traditional stones are normally to be used;