

Chancellor's Guidance on Churchyards and Monuments

Sheffield Diocesan Advisory Committee

Church



Buildings

These Directions include the Chancellor's written guidance under section 12(8) of the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991, and have been prepared after consultation with the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

Annex II Churchyard Rules

1 Location of graves

No burial may be permitted and no memorial erected within 3.5 metres of the walls of the church except where authorised by faculty.

2 Reservation of grave spaces

A grave space may not be reserved except by faculty; informal reservation has no legal effect. A memorial in such a space requires the same permission as any other.

3 Procedure for the Introduction of Memorials

A minimum period of six months should normally elapse between the death of a person to be commemorated and an application for the introduction of a memorial.

Permission must be obtained for the introduction of any memorial. The incumbent, priest-in-charge or team vicar with responsibility for the area in which the churchyard is situated, or if no person holds any of those positions the area dean, may give authority for the introduction of simple memorials in respect of burials complying with these Rules; but other types of memorial must be authorised by the Chancellor under faculty.

Every application to erect a memorial, or place anything whatsoever or to do any works in the churchyard should be made in the first instance in writing to the incumbent, on the form

issued by the diocese and obtainable from the incumbent, with a full description of the proposed work.

Permission to erect a memorial should be obtained before the applicant accepts an estimate or otherwise enters into a contract with a funeral director or stonemason.

4 Dimensions of Headstone

Headstones should be no larger than 1200mm (4ft) high, measured from the surface of the ground, 900mm (3ft) wide and 150mm (6in) thick. They should be no less than 750mm (2ft 6in) high, 500mm (1ft 8in) wide and no less than 75mm (3in) thick (except in the case of slate memorials, which may be thinner but no less than 40mm (1½in thick). These measurements are not intended to define standard proportions of memorials, and memorials may be of any dimensions within the given maxima and minima. (The metric equivalents given above are slightly less than the Imperial dimensions, but are recommended for use by the National Association of Master Masons.)

Over cremated remains a flat stone not more than 37cms by 30cms may be placed. The practice of installing 'miniature' vertical headstones is not permitted (unless it is already the practice in a particular churchyard) as the effect of rows of such stones is displeasing.

5 Base and Foundation Slab

A headstone must be adequately secured in the ground so as to ensure that it is stable. A headstone may stand on a stone base, provided that it is an integral part of the design and does not project more than 102mm (4in) beyond the headstone in any direction, except where a receptacle for flowers is provided, in which case this may extend up to 200mm (8in) in front of the headstone. Due regard should be paid to the nature of the ground and the problem of settlement; where a concrete sub-base is necessary for these reasons, it must be below the surface of the ground. Other methods of fixing the memorial in the ground are not discouraged, and the base of the memorial may be so shaped that it can be inserted directly into the ground at sufficient depth to ensure stability.

6 Kerbstones

Kerbstones are not normally allowed. They may exceptionally be permitted in parts of churchyards where both the following conditions are met: (a) that kerbstones are already common in that area; and (b) that the introduction of the proposed kerbstones would have no adverse effect on the maintenance of the churchyard.

7 Materials

All memorials should be made of natural stone (in which case they have a polished surface on the front and on the top surface of the base only), or of hardwood. Stones traditionally used in local buildings, or stones closely similar to them in colour and texture, are to be preferred. White marble, synthetic stone or plastic are not permitted. Although black granite is common in local authority cemeteries, black, blue or red granites, and granites darker than Rustenburg grey, are discouraged in churchyards and are only permitted where they are already common in the part of the churchyard in which the proposed memorial is to be placed.

8 Design

Figure sculpture and other statuary must be authorised by faculty.

Headstones need not be restricted to a rectangular shape. However, memorials in the shape of a heart or book are not permitted other than by faculty, nor are railings, chains, chippings or glass shades.

9 Epitaphs and other inscriptions

The inscription on the memorial must contain at least the name of the deceased, the date of his or her death, and the date of birth or the age at death. Any factual material in the inscription must be accurate. Inscriptions must be simple and dignified, and may include quotations from Scripture or other appropriate literary sources. It should be incised, or in relief, and may be painted. No new memorials with plastic or other inserted lettering may be introduced.

Additions may be made to an inscription at a later date following a subsequent interment in the same grave or for other suitable reason (for example cremation or death abroad). However, any such alteration must be separately approved. The lettering, lay-out and wording must be consistent with the original inscription.

Photographs or porcelain portraits are not permitted. Where the stone is to bear any embellishment other than lettering, this should be fully described in the application; in such cases, the incumbent may require the applicant to seek a faculty.

The minister must not approve a proposed inscription if he or she considers that it is likely to be controversial for any reason or in any other way inappropriate.

Any proposal to add a QR or similar marker to a headstone will have to be the subject of a faculty application.

10 Trademarks

No advertisement or trademark should be inscribed on a headstone. The mason's name may be inscribed at the side or on the reverse in unleaded letters, no larger than 13mm (½in) in height.

11 Flowers

Except where the design of a headstone includes an integral receptacle for plants or cut flowers, they may be placed in a removable container (not of glass), which must be sunk completely into the ground.

Wreaths and cut flowers may be placed in such containers or laid on any grave, but must be removed as soon as they appear to be withered. Artificial flowers are not encouraged, and where they are used they may be removed after three months or earlier if they should deteriorate. Bulbs may be planted in the soil of any grave.

12 Other items

Families, especially in the case of the death of a child, sometimes wish to place other items on the grave. This is discouraged: the items may be stolen or vandalised, and their deterioration can become a source of distress. In any event, they should be removed not later than six months after the burial. Please do not be offended if those caring for the churchyard remove items that have become weather-beaten and worn.

13 Cremated remains

The deposit of cremated remains is permitted in areas designated for the purpose by faculty, even in churchyards otherwise closed for burials. In the case of the deposit of cremated remains, commemoration in a Book of Remembrance is appropriate, but a memorial tablet is only permitted where a faculty has been granted either for an individual or collective commemoration.

The interment of cremated remains in a casket is a burial and is not within the scope of a faculty authorising the deposit of remains. Where cremated remains are so buried, memorial tablets may be permitted where they are already found in the churchyard, but unless some other form is allowed by faculty should be in natural stone and level with the surface of the ground. Memorials of a different colour or design may be permitted where that colour or design is already common in the relevant part of the churchyard; in case of doubt, the incumbent should consult the secretary of the DAC and may require those proposing to install the memorial to seek faculty approval.

14 Removal of memorials

The repair of memorials is the responsibility of the family concerned, but PCCs may act if the family cannot be traced, or will not act. No memorial may be removed without a faculty. A faculty will usually be granted in the case of damaged headstones dated after 1850 subject to conditions (for example as to advertisements). Faculties may be granted in appropriate cases for the removal or relocation of memorials to enable a churchyard to be properly maintained or to enable the ground to be re-used.

Memorials that comply with these rules can be agreed with the incumbent of the parish or benefice. Those that fall outside the rules cannot be authorized and the applicant or petitioner will need to apply for permission known as a faculty from the Chancellor of the Diocese. Advice on how to do this can be obtained from the incumbent or from the DAC Secretary at Church House, 95-99 Effingham St, Rotherham S65 1BL.