

Neutral Citation Number: [2025] ECC She 6

DIOCESE OF SHEFFIELD

In the Consistory Court

Sarah Vanessa Spear, MA (Oxon), Barrister-at-Law

Deputy Chancellor

In the Matter of CATCLIFFE: ST MARY

Works: Memorial to Declan and Peter Knight

Judgment

1. A private petition dated 27th May 2025 is brought for the installation of a memorial to the late Declan Knight and the late Peter Knight in Catcliffe St Mary Churchyard. The petitioners are Patricia Knight, Vanessa Knight and Iain Knight, respectively the grandmother of Declan, and the daughter and son of Peter. Declan sadly died in 1999 at the age of four, and Peter in 2019 aged sixty-seven.
2. The Knight family petition the Court for permission to place a memorial headstone which contravenes the Diocesan Churchyard Rules in that a black granite slab and kerbstones are proposed. In addition, they wish to have coloured pictures of a blue teddy and a yellow train on the headstone.
3. The Diocese of Sheffield Churchyard Rules state that ‘all memorials should be made of natural stone’ and do not permit the use of black granite, though it may be authorised where it is ‘already common in the part of the churchyard in which the proposed memorial is to be placed’. Any embellishment or symbol other than lettering may require a faculty. Kerbstones ‘are not normally allowed’ but ‘may exceptionally be permitted...where kerbstones are already common in that area and the introduction of the proposed kerbstones would have no adverse effect on the maintenance of the churchyard’ (Diocese of Sheffield Churchyard Rules 2024, paragraphs 10,11 & 13).
4. The details of the proposed memorial are clearly and helpfully set out in the application together with illustrations. I am entirely satisfied that nothing in the wording or the design is in any way inconsistent with the Christian faith or fundamentally inappropriate in a churchyard setting. The size of the proposed memorial appears to be within that which is permitted, so far as I can tell.
5. As stated above, black granite memorials may be authorised in parts of churchyards where they are already common, and kerbstones (exceptionally) where they are already common and would have no adverse effect on maintenance. I have been provided with

photographs and a plan of the churchyard, which satisfy me that there are indeed a number of memorials of black granite with kerbstones similar in style to what is proposed already in this churchyard, and that at least some of these are in close proximity to the Knight grave. They do not appear to be causing any major problems with maintenance.

6. Albeit that the rules seek in particular to restrict the use of black granite and the installation of kerbstones, I cannot conclude that their use here would have any overall impact on the appearance of the churchyard or any real impact upon its maintenance.
7. The coloured images of a teddy and a train are more problematic. Whilst there are other examples of colour used on black granite in this churchyard, this is more unusual and not in my view wholly appropriate to the setting. A churchyard is distinct from a cemetery cared for by the local authority. It is a space of quiet reflection for all. Whilst I fully understand the desire of the family to have a personalised and appropriate memorial headstone for Peter and Declan's grave, the use of coloured images will inevitably make it stand out from adjacent memorials and may be regarded as obtrusive. I am minded, however, in the circumstances to allow the use of the actual images (a teddy and a train) that the family wish to have, albeit that images are generally discouraged, provided that they are in the same colour as the lettering, rather than blue and yellow. A faculty will therefore be issued to allow the installation of the memorial with that proviso.

S V Spear

Deputy Chancellor

4th September 2025