

**Inscriptions:** Inscriptions must be simple, reverent and theologically acceptable; they may include appropriate quotations from the scriptures or literary sources.

- A request for any other inscription (including non-literary verses) must be made to the Diocesan Chancellor via the Registry. Inscriptions must be incised or in relief. Plastic, lead or other inserted lettering is not permitted.
- Nicknames or pet names may be used in addition to baptismal names; they should, however, normally be included in inverted commas within the name of the deceased. Diminutives and pet names may be permitted within the discretion of the incumbent or relevant area dean.
- Additions may be made to an inscription at a later date following a further interment in the same grave or for other suitable reason. Any such addition must, however, be separately authorised in a manner similar to that set out at 5 overleaf. The lettering, layout and wording must be consistent with the original inscription.
- Hand-crafted letter-cutting is welcomed and encouraged (see the examples given in *The Churchyards Handbook* and in *Memorials by Artists*).

**Commemoration after cremation:** The erection of a memorial tablet or ledger is not permitted except in an area set aside by Faculty (and then only in accordance with the terms of that Faculty). A suitable addition to an existing memorial to a close relative is permitted but must be separately authorised in a manner similar to that set out at 5 overleaf.

**Trademarks:** No advertisement or trademark may be inscribed on a memorial, although

the mason's name may be inscribed at the side or the reverse in unlead letters, no larger than 13mm (1/2 inch).

**Upkeep:** Graves may not be fenced or otherwise individually delineated; and

- Individual gardens, fencing or shrubs are not permitted, although the incumbent may permit the planting of a few bulbs or annuals.
- Only cut flowers or wreaths may be left at the graveside.
- Toys or other similar ornaments may be left at the graveside for a period of twelve months after the burial or interment. They must then be removed by the family or by the incumbent after consultation with the family.

The construction of a brick-lined vault, bricked grave or mausoleum in a churchyard requires the authority of a Faculty. Such a Faculty will be granted only if there are exceptional reasons. If there are, the Chancellor will require an assurance that

- any memorial to be erected over the vault will comply with diocesan and local churchyard regulations, and
- a fund for future maintenance will be established if the Faculty is granted
- any necessary planning consent has been obtained.

For further information, please see: [www.oxford.anglican.org/registry/churchyard\\_regs.html](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/registry/churchyard_regs.html)



Photo KT Bruce of Oxfordshire sculptor Alec Peever at work. See [www.alecpeever.com](http://www.alecpeever.com)

# Churchyard Regulations Diocese of Oxford

## A guide for funeral directors and stonemasons



This is a guide to help funeral directors and stonemasons involved in the design and erection of memorials in churchyards. The current Churchyard Regulations are available in full on the diocesan website.

Experience shows that where Churchyard Regulations are not fully understood, the process of choosing a memorial can be fraught with distress and disappointment for the bereaved family at an already difficult time.

We know what an important part funeral directors and stonemasons play in helping people choose a memorial that is appropriate and dignified. We hope that by setting out the regulations clearly the process will run smoothly to the benefit of all those involved.

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## Principles

The key principle is to make sure that all of our churchyards are places of peace and beauty, and form an appropriate setting for the church.

The aim is for harmony, but not necessarily uniformity. While we want to encourage creativity and imagination, we equally want to avoid memorials that look totally out of place. We need to balance the particular wishes of individual mourners against the concerns of other bereaved families and the community as a whole.

In summary, a memorial should respect its surroundings; not impose an unreasonable burden of upkeep on future generations; and the inscription should be appropriate to the setting.

## The process

A parish priest or Area Dean during a vacancy can approve a proposed memorial if it complies with the Churchyard Regulations. He or she can also approve the alteration of an existing memorial to incorporate the details of a second burial in the same grave.

If a proposal does not comply with the Regulations or is likely to be controversial in any way, a 'Faculty' will be needed. This is in the hands of the Chancellor, who will be interested in the views of the parish priest and the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

## Unauthorised memorials

If a memorial is erected without approval, the Chancellor may order it to be removed - at the expense of whoever erected it.

## The Churchyard Regulations

The Churchyard Regulations are published in full on the diocesan website [www.oxford.anglican.org/registry/churchyard\\_regs.html](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/registry/churchyard_regs.html). Below are the key points of the Regulations relating to the design and erection of memorials.

**1.** The right to burial of a parishioner is confined to interment in the churchyard. The erection of a tombstone or monument over a grave remains a privilege, and strictly speaking no tombstone or monument may be erected in a churchyard without the authority of a Faculty from the Consistory Court, granted by the Diocesan Chancellor. Because it is a churchyard, any memorial must be compatible with the Christian religion.

**2.** No permission will be given for the erection of a memorial or ledger until six months after the date of burial or interment.

**3.** The ultimate responsibility for authorising a churchyard memorial or ledger lies with the Consistory Court. Application may be made at any time to the Consistory Court for authorisation by Faculty to erect a memorial outside the scope of these regulations.

**4.** In practice, the Chancellor has delegated a limited authority to the incumbent, who may normally grant permission for the erection of a tombstone, monument or ledger. During a vacancy in the benefice, these delegated powers can be exercised by the area dean after consultation with the churchwardens.

**5.** Memorials or ledgers may be authorised by incumbents, priests-in-charge or area deans only if:

- the memorial or ledger falls within these regulations (and any supplementary

regulations imposed by the PCC and authorised by the Consistory Court), and

- a formal agreement is entered into by the legal personal representative or executor of the deceased seeking to erect the memorial. The churchyard memorial or ledger agreement form is available is available on the diocesan website

**6.** No memorial or ledger may be erected until all the provisions set out in paragraph five have been completed. This also applies to additional inscriptions. No commission to an undertaker or monumental mason should be accepted without the formal agreement.

**7.** The incumbent may not authorise any memorial that falls outside the Regulations. Any such application should be referred to the Registrar of the Diocese. Permission will be given only if there are exceptional reasons to justify this.

**Materials:** A memorial or ledger must be made of natural stone with a non-reflecting surface, or of hardwood. Stones traditionally used in local buildings, or stones closely similar in colour and texture, are preferred. Black, blue or red igneous rock, marble, synthetic stone or plastic are not permitted. Painted or polished stone is also not permitted, although a small area of non-reflective polishing may be permitted to take an inscription.

**Dimensions:** A memorial may be:

- no larger than 1200mm (4ft) in height from the ground, 900mm (3ft) in width and 150mm (6 inches) in thickness; and
- no smaller than 75mm (3 inches) in thickness, save that slate memorials may be no smaller than 38mm (1 1/2 inches) in thickness.
- A ledger may be no larger than 450mm (18 inches) by 450mm (18 inches).

**Base and foundation slab:** A memorial must be inserted sufficiently into the ground to ensure stability or be supported by a pre-cast concrete shoe.

- Due regard must be paid to the nature of the ground and the problem of settlement.
- A headstone may stand on a stone base, provided that it is an integral part of the design and does not project more than 50mm (2 inches) beyond the headstone in any direction.
- Up to two vases are permitted, provided that they are integral to the base. In this case, the base must project no more than 150 mm (6 inches).
- Foundation slabs must not be visible.
- The headstone must either be set into a below-ground shoe or be connected to its base by non-ferrous dowels.

**Designs:** A memorial need not be rectangular in shape. Curved tops may be preferable to straight edges.

- Individually designed memorials are encouraged but may only be permitted by Faculty.
- Memorials in the shape of a heart or cross are not permitted save by way of Faculty.
- Photographic and etched images, mouldings, etchings, videos or sound-recordings of the deceased, imagery (of stained glass windows, flowers, animals, toys and the like), kerbs, fencing, railings, chains, chippings or glass shades are prohibited save when permitted by Faculty, which is unlikely to be granted save in exceptional circumstances.
- No form of lighting is allowed.

**Sculpture:** Armorial bearings, crests, figurative sculpture, or other statuary may only be authorised by Faculty.