

Diocese of Truro: Regulations concerning Memorials & Headstones in Churchyards & Consecrated Burial Grounds (May 2019)



DIOCESE OF TRURO

DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of these regulations is to preserve suitable and harmonious surroundings for our parish churches and maintain the dignity of our burial grounds. They are binding on the clergy, funeral directors, and parochial church councils (PCCs) and those involved with using the churchyards for burials of bodies or of cremated remains (ashes), and for the erection of memorials/gravestones. Parish Priests and PCCs may prepare regulations for their churchyards which are complementary to, but not less stringent than, these regulations. Such regulations must be approved by the Archdeacon before issue.

2. The right of a parishioner in a churchyard (not closed by Order in Council) is confined to that of interment.

The erection of a memorial over a grave (which may be in the form of a cross, a headstone, a ledger stone, a book on a tick rest or some other seemly memorial) remains a privilege, and requires permission as outlined below (4).

A minimum period of six months should elapse between the burial of a person to be commemorated and the erection of a memorial. This period allows time for the settling of disturbed ground, and for consideration to be given to the type of memorial desired. This period does not apply to cremated remains.

3. Responsibility for the safe installation of any memorial rests with the monumental mason. Ongoing liability for the memorial's maintenance in a safe condition subsequently lies with the person who purchased it and, after that person's death, the heirs of the deceased.

PERMISSION FOR MEMORIALS

4.(a) The Parish Priest may grant permission for the erection of a memorial which conforms to these regulations. In a situation where there is no Parish Priest, the Rural Dean should provide the required permission. Such permission is possible through the delegated authority of the Chancellor of the Diocese.

(b) Memorials which do not conform to these regulations must be specifically authorised by the Chancellor. The Chancellor will decide whether to give informal permission or whether applicants must petition for a faculty.

(c) Churchwardens and assistant curates are not authorised to grant permission for the erection of memorials.

Those intending to erect a memorial/gravestone should not enter into an agreement with a monumental mason for its supply until the necessary permission for its introduction into the churchyard has been granted in writing as described below.

5. Procedure for seeking permission:-

(a) An application must be submitted on the prescribed form (Form 1) to the Parish Priest (or Rural Dean). Full details as requested must be supplied by the applicants and the monumental mason. Forms that do not contain full details may be returned, causing delay.

(b) If the memorial does not meet the regulations below, the Parish Priest is unable to authorise its erection.

In such circumstances, directions must be sought from the Chancellor, who will indicate whether or not a faculty is required. Advice regarding this process may be obtained from the Diocesan Registry (truroregistry@wvv.co.uk).

6. A Parish Priest is not bound by decisions made in contravention of these regulations by previous clergy. The existence of memorials/gravestones inappropriately authorised in the past are not grounds for further introductions of such memorials/gravestones.

MEMORIAL REGULATIONS

7. Regulation dimensions

Memorials may be of any dimensions within the given maximum and minimum.

(a) Headstones;

Height: between 1200mm (4'0") and 750mm (2'6") [measured from the surface of the ground]

Width: between 900mm (3'0") and 500mm (1'8")

Thickness: between 150mm (6") and 75mm (3")

[except in the case of slate memorials which may be no less than 38mm (1½").]

(b) Headstones for infant burials:

Height: not less than 600mm (2'0")

Width: not less than 375mm (1'3")

Thickness: not less than 50mm (2")

(c) Cross and base memorials:

Height (from the surface of the ground): between 1.5 metre (5'0") & 900mm (3'0")

Width: between 900mm (3'0") and 600mm (2'0")

Thickness: between 380mm (1'3") and 150mm (6")

(d) Horizontal ledger stones:

Length: between 2100mm (7'0") and 120cm (4'0")

Width: between 900mm (3'0") and 600mm (2'0")

Ledger stones to be laid flush with the ground, **unless the Parish Priest and PCC, in their absolute discretion, agree otherwise.**

(e) Memorial plaques:

Plaques set above interred cremated remains shall be laid flush with the ground, **unless the Parish Priest and PCC, in their absolute discretion, agree otherwise**, and measure not more than 450mm (18 inches) by 400mm (16 inches).

The PCC of the church may have set aside a special area for the interment of cremated remains, and any rules laid down by the PCC must also be observed.

(f) Base and Foundation Slab Headstones may be of three types:

(1) So shaped that they can be inserted directly into the ground at sufficient depth to ensure stability;

(2) On an integral base not more than 900mm (3'0") wide, nor projecting more than 100mm (4") in any direction, nor more than 225mm (9") high

(3) On a vase base not more than 900mm (3'0") wide, nor projecting more than 100mm (4") on either side, nor projecting more than 180mm (7") in front of the headstone, no more than 100mm (4") high. The base must be no more than 375mm (1'3") overall, front to back. It should be noted that since the base may not be more than 900mm (3'0") wide, the use of a headstone more than 700mm (2'4") wide will reduce the extent to which the base may project on either side.

8. Regulation materials.

Memorials must be of approved natural stone or of hardwood.

The following stone is approved in the Diocese. Please contact the DAC secretary for advice if necessary:

(a) Granite:

Preferred: Silver grey, quarried in Cornwall and Devon.

Permitted: Silver grey from other sources including Tarn (France), Karin (Finland), Marlow (Portugal).

(b) Slate: Cornish, Welsh Blue and Grey, Lakeland Green and Grey.

(c) **No other materials are permitted.** In particular blue, red, black and dark grey granites, white marble, synthetic stone and plastic are not permitted.

9. Designs and statues.

Individuality and excellence of design of memorials is encouraged.

A design carved into the face of the stone or hardwood is permissible, provided that it is of high quality, relevant and reverent. **The design may be uncoloured or may be tinted in black, white, silver or gold leaf.** Any other proposals are subject to permission by the Chancellor.

A cross should be individually designed if a permanent memorial in this form is desired. A book or Bible design is acceptable but should be mounted upon a tick-rest or a second base, and the overall height may be of less than 750mm (2'6").

Headstones of rectangular shape or with curved tops are permitted. Memorials of other shapes, as well as sculpture and statuary, may only be authorised by the Chancellor.

Photographs or porcelain or other portraits or pictures are not permitted.

Military, heraldic or other insignia or emblems are permitted only if written permission has been given by the military unit or other proprietor of the device.

Kerbs, railings, chains, chippings or glass shades are not permitted.

10. Trademarks.

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

11. Quick Response Codes (QRC)

No QR codes may be placed upon any memorial without permission being granted by the Chancellor.

12. Regulation Finishes

Preferred:

a smooth finish (no more polished than a non-reflective or honed finish).

Permissible:

(a) a rough finish

(b) the inscribed face may be polished to a reflective finish (but not any other part of the stone).

13. Inscriptions

(a) Dedications should be simple, reverent and consistent with the Christian faith. The purpose of the epitaph is to identify the resting place of the person's mortal remains, to honour the dead, to comfort the living and to inform posterity. The engraving should harmonise with the selected material.

Inscriptions must be incised in the surface or carved in relief, and may be painted in black, white, silver or gold leaf.

Lead lettering may be used. Plastic or other inlaid lettering is not permitted.

(b) Additions may be made to an inscription at a later date following a subsequent interment in the same grave or for another suitable reason. However, any such addition must be separately approved by the Parish Priest, and the lettering, layout and wording must be consistent with the original inscription. Applications should be made to the Parish Priest using Form 1 (see below)

(c) Additions to an inscription may also refer to a relative of the person or persons interred, whose remains are not interred in the same grave. Applications made to the Parish Priest require that all known family members of the deceased are consulted and that none raise objection (Form 1a).

(d) A plaque to be placed on the grave may be allowed instead of, or in addition to, an addition to an inscription under (b or c) above, on the same conditions as an addition to an inscription. The plaque shall comply with regulation 7(e).

14. War Graves.

(a) Gravestones provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are permitted.

(b) Memorials for the fallen in recent armed conflicts

The Chancellor has issued Guidance which is available from the DAC Secretary or the Diocesan Registry and must be consulted before any steps are taken.

15. Commemoration after cremation:

Each churchyard has its own policy for the interment of ashes following cremation. Where a special area has been set aside by faculty for interment of ashes, the rules laid down for interments and appropriate commemoration must be observed.

16. Flowers and other tributes

(a) Except where the design of a headstone includes an integral receptacle, plants or cut flowers may be placed in a removable container which must be sunk flush with the ground. **The Parish Priest may authorise the removal of any containers which do not comply with these regulations, or which have become redundant.**

(b) Where a flower vase is the only memorial it must be no more than 300mm (1'0") high, measured from the surface of the ground, nor more than 300mm (1'0") wide, or more than 250mm (10") front to back, and must be securely fixed to a foundation stone which itself shall be flush with the ground and nor more than 300mm (1'0") in either dimension.

(c) Wreaths and cut flowers may also be laid on a grave, but must be removed as soon as they have withered. Remembrance Day poppies, traditional Christmas wreaths and other artificial flowers (except plastic) may be laid on a grave for a period of not more than two months.

(d) The Parish Priest may authorise the removal of any wreaths, cut or artificial flowers which have withered, deteriorated and/or become unsightly.

(e) One suitable toy or tribute may be placed on the grave of a child (i.e. a person under the age of 18 years) provided that it is removed after a period of six months. No ornaments or additions may be placed on other graves save for flowers or wreaths as described above.

17. These regulations supersede and replace those previously in force.

Timothy J. Briden

Chancellor of the Diocese of Truro

Date: 1st May 2019

(updated October 2020)