

# Guidance Note Memorials in Churchyards

# ChurchCare



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**Churchyards are very special places. Their ambience comes from the memorials, the church itself, and from the history of the community that the place encapsulates.**

**Memorial design is controlled to ensure that those special qualities are retained and enhanced when new additions are made.**

## Authorisation

Memorials in churchyards, whether of a gravestone, tablet, memorial seat or tree, can only be introduced with the necessary authority.

In the case of gravestones, authority to authorise gravestones is given to the incumbent under the Diocesan Churchyard Regulations.

Where there is a proposal for a gravestone of good design but outside the regulations, or something such as a memorial seat or tree, the family should be asked to petition for a faculty.

Additional items such as photographs, toys and

windmills may not be permitted, depending on the terms of the Regulations.



## QR codes on gravestones

Questions have recently been asked whether it is

permissible to include QR codes on gravestones. Such codes may not be permitted under an incumbent's delegated authority, but will require the authorisation of a faculty. Any person considering applying for a faculty should be aware that there may be concerns about linking a gravestone to website that is out of the control of the minister and churchwardens, and which may contain material that is defamatory or inconsistent with Christian teaching.

## Choosing a gravestone

Each memorial is a private commemoration, but within a public setting.





The design of each memorial therefore needs to take account of the setting, the building stone used in the church itself and the historic memorials in the churchyard.

Choosing an appropriate memorial to commemorate a loved one can be a difficult process.

It is normal practice for a period of 6 months to elapse between the burial and the erection of a memorial.



*Memorial garden at Penn (Buckinghamshire)*

Whilst standard headstones with machine-cut lettering have become the norm in recent years, the Church Buildings Council hopes that the bereaved will consider something more personal that will blend in with the historic character of the churchyard.

Although funeral directors are willing to help relatives choose a gravestone and act as an intermediary with a memorial mason, it is worth considering other approaches.

Why not consider something different, such as a wooden memorial or a high-quality stone memorial with hand-cut lettering produced by an independent artist?

Your local DAC will be able to advise you on possibilities, and there are organizations such as the Memorial Arts Charity that can help.

### **Materials, size, design and inscription**

Churchyard regulations specify the size, materials and inscription on a headstone. These parameters are put in place to ensure that a headstone is appropriate for the setting in a public place, and does not 'stick out'. Black polished granite for instance would not be appropriate in a churchyard full of historic memorials of the local stone.

Regulations typically say that inscriptions should be 'simple and reverent', and that etching or carving may be used for an appropriate image. Where an incumbent is asked to approve an application for a memorial, and s(he) has doubts as to whether it is appropriate, the matter should be referred to the Diocesan Registrar for advice.

### **Cremated remains**

The design and management of any area for cremated remains is the one of the most

difficult issues for those managing churchyards.

Unless there are only a few interments, it is usual for an area of the yard to be set aside by faculty; the DAC and church architect will be good sources of advice and be able to point to good examples in the locality.



*Cremated remains area at Willingdon (Sussex)*

Memorialisation will sometimes be through an entry in a Book of Remembrance in the church, or through small individual memorials.

The best examples of cremated remains areas are where the area is enclosed, and where there is a single central memorial, or there are memorials are incorporated into a wall or path.

**May 2013**