

**DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD**  
**DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**



**MONUMENTS AND HEADSTONES**  
**IN CHURCHYARDS**

**(INCLUDING SUGGESTED INSCRIPTIONS)**

**GUIDELINES TO ASSIST PARISHES**

Revised August 2018

# MONUMENTS AND HEADSTONES

## IN CHURCHYARDS

### I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The DAC encourages good design, subject to the Chancellor's rules in the **Churchyard Handbook (2018 edition)**. Where the design is outside these rules, Faculty consent is required.
- 1.2 Everything in this paper assumes a working knowledge of the Chancellor's rules, and is designed to help to make decisions within those rules in a creative way. Parishes should also refer to the DAC Guidance Booklet: **Cremated Remains Areas**.
- 1.3 Anglican churchyards, in both town and country, have a very special character that is widely appreciated, not least by those whose relations and friends are commemorated in them. Much of this character is attributable to the monuments to be found in churchyards, of which headstones are the most numerous. The way in which they are traditionally arranged in churchyards is also an important factor.
- 1.4 It is desirable that existing headstones are preserved in their original position wherever possible, and that new headstones are in harmony with them, as well as with the church building and its environment. Over the centuries, fashions have changed with regard to size, style and shape of headstones, and also the nature of inscriptions, and new headstones should reflect this varied tradition.
- 1.5 A common misunderstanding is that the rules define only that which is permitted. The result is often row upon row of stones similar in height, colour and shape, with dull and unimaginative wording. This is not what is desired. The rules simply define what can be allowed without the need to apply for a Faculty. Artistic creativity is positively encouraged, and the Faculty process exists in this case to check against inappropriate excesses in monuments or wording; but do note that a Faculty will be needed for any shape or wording or illustration beyond that described in the rules.
- 1.6 What follows is intended as a stimulus to imagination, not a constraint nor an alternative to it. At times of bereavement the emotions can be raw and the mind feel numb. Examples, therefore, are given. However, they are only examples. Individuality and creativity is to be encouraged. Indeed, this booklet will have failed

if the result is serried rows of headstones all bearing the same inscriptions.

- 1.7 Under the Chancellor's directions there is a necessary time lapse of six months between the interment and the erection of a headstone, partly to allow the ground to settle. This will also be a time when the emotions can begin to settle and a time of considered reflection can be given to the wording formally submitted.

## **2. EXISTING HEADSTONES**

- 2.1 Existing headstones should be respected. They were erected by family and friends, often at great expense, in the expectation that they would provide a permanent memorial to the deceased. They can be of considerable historic interest because of the information that is to be found on them, and form part of the collective memory of the parish. Many also have elaborate structures or carving of artistic merit. For these reasons some headstones and other monuments in the churchyards are protected by listing, separate from the listing of the church itself, but the fact that a monument is not listed does not mean that it is not worth preserving.
- 2.2 Sometimes moving headstones is unavoidable, e.g. when an extension to the church is being built. When this happens the headstones should be carefully resited, if possible on the same alignment, and a record made of the new and old positions. Old headstones are often home to rare lichens, and these can die if the headstones are moved to a spot where conditions are not so favourable.
- 2.3 Headstones and other monuments can make churchyard maintenance more difficult, but the existing layout should be preserved as much as possible. Resiting headstones round the edge of a churchyard, for example, is quite out of keeping with the character of most churchyards and simply creates a park-like open space which has little meaning for visitors. Laying stones flat, either in grass or as paving stones, will rapidly result in the loss of the inscription, and should be a last resort. Most churchyards now include areas that are managed in such a way as to encourage wildlife and are mown much less frequently than other parts; visitors increasingly expect this and appreciate the reasons for it.
- 2.4 It is accepted that headstones and other monuments become dilapidated, whether as a result of vandalism, invasion by trees or other plants, or sheer old age. They may then be considered unsightly or potentially dangerous. In these cases, expert advice must

always be sought, and it will usually be possible to find a remedy that does not involve the destruction or resiting of the monument. Grants may be available for the repair of older or more interesting monuments, and the DAC is able to give further advice on this.

- 2.5 Parishes and others looking after churchyards should take particular care to prevent damaging plants such as ivy, brambles, and tree saplings establishing themselves on and around monuments. Where they have become established, steps should be taken to eliminate or at the very least contain them.

### **3. NEW HEADSTONES**

- 3.1 A headstone does not have to be rectangular, with or without a shaped top. It could, for example, be a Celtic cross, a pillar or an irregular shape. Anything out of the ordinary is likely to be more expensive as a monumental mason will need to cut it individually and there may be an excess of waste, but such shapes are not forbidden per se, rather a Faculty will be required.
- 3.2 Indeed, if a bereaved family understands that the deceased person is a unique human being, individually loved by God, then an individual style of headstone may be positively sought. The obvious danger is that this will only be available to those able to afford it, and we must guard against any suggestion that money buys individuality before God and humanity. The incumbent will wish to offer sensitive guidance here.
- 3.3 The material chosen will need to be from within those allowed in the rules, but there is a considerable variety listed (see Appendix I). The final choice will depend on several factors including:
  - a) the colour and texture of the church itself; stone and brick may each suggest quite different choices;
  - b) the type of stone already used in many of the existing headstones;
  - c) The impression the bereaved family wishes to give about the deceased person;
  - d) The “spirituality of material”, which may well be why a family chooses a particular stone

- 3.4 Polished stone is not permitted.
- 3.5 Other materials for grave markers, such as timber, metal or stones not specified in the rules, may be considered but are subject to Faculty consent.

#### 4. INSCRIPTIONS

- 4.1 Different stones and colours will be amenable to different styles of lettering and the advice of the letter carver will be invaluable. For example, Nabresina, Hopton Wood, Portland stone and slate easily allow a flowing script. A coarser stone such as York may suit capital letters only, and granite can only be cut mechanically using sandblasting over a rubber template.
- 4.2 It may be that, as well as the inscription; an illustration is desired on the headstone: a symbol, picture, pattern or other design that will speak of the person or of some Christian truth. If the illustration is not one of those permitted by delegated authority to the Incumbent or, during a vacancy in the benefice, by the Rural Dean or Archdeacon, then a Faculty should be sought. This should not deter applicants, and the Chancellor welcomes applications for designs which raise the spirit.
- 4.3 Letter-carving is a highly skilled craft, and care should be taken about the choice of mason. Ask to see examples of the letter-carver's work. At the outset discuss the budget, all charges and fees. The first meeting is often free, but subsequent occasions will be chargeable. It is important to remember that both design and carving are time consuming, and the costs will reflect that.
- 4.4 Website and other electronic communication details i.e. twitter, quick response (QR) codes on headstones are **prohibited**.

#### 5. THE DESCRIPTION

- 5.1 The facts about the person will be necessary, ie names and dates. Dates should not be abbreviated. If nicknames are to be included then these must be the name by which the person was generally known and should follow in brackets after the legal names. Note that nicknames may only be added with the express permission of the incumbent.

- 5.2 A description of the person's character is helpful: kind, generous, a pillar of the community etc.
- 5.3 Family relationships are important: mother, grandfather, son, daughter etc.
- 5.4 If the person was defined or well known by their occupation, then that could be included: a teacher, sailor, fire officer, nurse etc.
- 5.5. Interests and hobbies can add colour to the description of a person: a gardener, Guide leader, rambler etc.

## **6. ADDITIONAL WORDING**

- 6.1 As well as giving the name of the person who has died and their dates, people often wish to add some remark about the person who has died and a more general sentence of consolation. The Chancellor's Churchyard Handbook (2018 edition) specifies that this sentence must be consistent with the Christian belief. Many families must wonder where to start choosing such a sentence, and the following paragraphs are intended to help with that process.
- 6.2 Fewer words tend to make a stronger impact, and creativity is encouraged in choosing descriptions of a person, a theological truth, or an emotional sentiment, whether in prose or poetry. The use of a thesaurus might be helpful in finding the right word to identify the exact character trait to be described.
- 6.3 As with the choice of headstone, individuality is encouraged in the inscription. Wording chosen from a catalogue of examples rarely does justice to the person involved: to sum up, eighty years of life in this way is hardly honouring to the person, nor does it have much effect on the visitor to the churchyard.
- 6.4 In centuries past, humour was occasionally used and when read today can lift the spirit. If success is to be found here, then care must be taken that the humour is generous, timeless, and easy to understand.
- 6.5 Examples of appropriate texts are given in Appendix I, but it must be emphasised that these are only a starting point to stimulate thought not a complete list from which to choose.

## **7. CHRISTIAN FAITH**

- 7.1 The deceased is interred in a Christian churchyard. The visitor can expect to be lifted from the human experience of bereavement, through the contribution of the deceased person's life, to the hope of heaven and eternity through faith in Jesus Christ.
- 7.2 Words chosen to shed light on that hope must be chosen with care. Phrases which initially appear to be comforting may, on examination, not always be found to hold much content, and it is important the sentiments expressed are in accordance with a Christian understanding of life and death. Words appropriate for a card or wreath are not usually suitable for a permanent memorial.
- 7.3 Phrases from the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, or from well-known hymns can be a good starting point. Bereaved relatives are encouraged to discuss their proposals with the Incumbent or, during a vacancy in the benefice, the Rural Dean or Archdeacon, before an application is submitted on Form CRI. Clergy are always ready to help in this matter.

## **8. CENTRAL MEMORIALS IN AREAS FOR CREMATED REMAINS**

- 8.1 Increasingly, central memorials are being placed in areas where ashes are interred, as a focus for the area. The DAC's policy on such memorials is given in the DAC guidance booklet: **Cremated Remains Areas**.
- 8.2 Suggestions for wording on central memorials, some of which may also be suitable for individual headstones, may be found in Appendix 2.

## REFERENCES

The Chancellor's Churchyard Handbook (2018 Edition): 'A Guide to the Rules Relating to Burial, Interment of Cremated Remains, and Other Matters Relating to Churchyards'.

DAC guidance booklet on 'Cremated Remains Areas' is available from the DAC Secretary (Tel No. 01245 294413/294423) or downloadable from Diocesan website: [www.chelmsford.anglican.org/parishes/dac/dac\\_notes](http://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/parishes/dac/dac_notes)

The Church Buildings Council, The Churchyards Handbook, published by Church House Publishing 2001. Website: [www.chpublishing.co.uk](http://www.chpublishing.co.uk)

Frazer & Oestreicher: The Art of Remembering, published by Carcanet, 1998 (£9.95). This is an amazingly helpful illustrated guide to what is possible and is available from the Diocesan Book Shop. (Tel. No. 01245 2994405).

Frazer, Harriet, Memorials by Artists, Snape Priory, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 1SA. (Tel. No. 01728 688934)  
*The Memorial Arts Charity (now incorporating Memorials by Artists)*  
Website: [www.memorialartscharity.org.uk](http://www.memorialartscharity.org.uk)

Frazer, Harriet/Hilary Meynell Memorials by Artists, for young people, children and babies, Snape Priory, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 1SA (Tel. No. 01728 688934)  
*The Memorial Arts Charity (now incorporating Memorials by Artists)*  
Website: [www.memorialartscharity.org.uk](http://www.memorialartscharity.org.uk)



## APPENDIX I

### Permitted Stone Types:

	Name of stone	Colour/description	Origin
<b>Limestones</b>	Blue Lias	Grey/blue with irregular shale pattern	UK (Dorset/Somerset)
	Chilmark	Cream	Wiltshire
	Hopton Wood	Creamy grey	UK (Derbyshire)
	Hornton	Light brown, brown-purple, grey, green running to various shades of mauve and blue	UK (Oxfordshire)
	Nabresina	Creamy but with occasional light brown/orange patches (like coffee stains)	Italy
	Oathill Cotswold Cream	Cream	Gloucestershire
	Portland	Creamy/white	UK (Portland)
	Purbeck Pond Freestone	Creamy white	UK (Dorset)
	Purbeck Thornback	Cream to grey/buff/beige (with small shale pattern)	UK (Dorset)
	<b>Sandstones</b>	Caithness Stone	Grey slate-like with fine quartz sparkle
Dukes		Dark and light pink/buff veining	UK
Forest of Dean		Cream (similar to Yorkstone)	UK
Peakmoor		Buff/yellow/pink occasional iron intrusions	UK
Scotch Buff		Cream with slight brown speckling	UK
Stoneraise Red		Salmon pink with quartz sparkle	UK
Wattscliffe Lilac		Lilac/grey	UK
West stone		Light grey/green/buff	UK
Yorkstone		Cream to bluish grey	UK (Yorkshire)
<b>Other stone types</b>	Slate (metamorphic rock)	Dark grey, grey/plum and grey/green	UK (Wales, Cumbria, Cornwall)

## APPENDIX 2

### Examples of Wording for Inscriptions

The following are only examples, not a complete list from which to choose. The source of the inscription is given here for interest and would not normally be included on the headstone.

#### **The simple and well known:**

In loving memory

Reunited

Rest in peace

Peace, perfect peace

I know that my Redeemer lives

Forever with the Lord

The best is yet to be

Robert Browning

All shall be well

(and all manner of things shall be well)

Julian of Norwich

Our loss, God's gain

Of your charity, pray for the soul of . . . .

#### **From scripture and hymns:**

Abide with me

By His grace we are healed

We feebly struggle, they in glory shine

Till in Heaven we take our place

In God's house for evermore

Through Grace we are saved

Underneath are His everlasting arms

Though we die, yet shall we live

The Lord is my Shepherd

Be still and know that I am God  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Forgive our foolish ways  
Lost in wonder, love and praise  
And in dying we are born to eternal life  
And in God's house for evermore  
My dwelling place shall be  
Make them to be numbered with thy saints

**For a baby's death:**

Run with the wind and play with the stars, Little One  
This little babe was lent not given,  
To bud on earth and bloom in Heaven  
Our child, our love  
Jesus called a little child [unto Him]

**Making it personal:**

A gentle man; he lived at . . . .  
She served God right merrily  
Her end was peace  
Transplanted to God's garden  
She combined beauty with tenderness and wit  
She lived her life with joy  
He ended well  
Wife and lover, friend and mother

**The link between the deceased and the community:**

Man of integrity  
He worked all his life at Merrow Farm, next to this church

Mayor of Tangmere, the 4<sup>th</sup> generation to be buried in this parish  
For upwards of 30 years a most respectable butcher in Springfield

**More adventurous: from the poets:**

In my end is my beginning T.S. Eliot

Play, smile, think of me, pray for me Scott Holland

I am but waiting for you Scott Holland

And soonest our best men with thee do go John Donne

So the darkness shall be the light  
And the stillness the dancing T.S. Eliot

Pray for me, as I will for thee, Thomas Moore  
That we may merrily meet in Heaven

That best portion of a good man's life  
His little, nameless unremembered acts  
of kindness and of love William Wordsworth

Of your charity, pray for the soul(s) of . . .

Our loss, God's gain

We cannot, Lord, thy purpose see  
As all is well that's done by Thee

God takes our loved ones from our homes  
But never from our hearts

Our Child

Our Love Stevie Smith

In a dark time, the eye begins to see Theodore Roethke

Trust show the way Hildegard of Bingen

Remember N, on pilgrimage

**The following are suggestions for wording on central  
memorials in Cremated Remains Areas. Some may be  
suitable for individual headstones:**

The souls of the righteous are in God's hand  
They are at peace

Wisdom 3

The eternal God is our refuge and underneath are His everlasting arms	Deuteronomy 33
I will see you again and you will be joyful	John 16
My peace I leave with you	John 14
Their bodies are at peace And their names live forever	Ecclesiasticus 44
Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ	Romans 8
We will be with the Lord forever	I Thessalonians 4
We will see God as He is	I John 3
Into your hands I commend my spirit For you have redeemed me, O God of truth	Psalm 31
I am the resurrection and the life	John 2
The Lord is my shepherd Therefore can I lack nothing	Psalm 23
God will show us the path of life In His presence is the fullness of joy	Psalm 16
To live in the heart of God is not to die	
At peace with Jesus	
In the name of Jesus Befriended by his saints Aided by his angels May you rest this day	
May heaven open wide before you To see Christ and his sunlit company	
May you rest in peace and in fulfilment	
May you rest in the love of God	
May you run straight home into God's embrace Go safely, go dancing, go running home	
Go on your way dear soul, to love, to light, to life eternal	
Held in the hollow of God's hands	

## **POLICY**

1. All memorials must comply with the Chancellor's rules in the **Churchyard Handbook** (2018 edition).
2. Monuments must be compatible with the environment, appearance and atmosphere of the church and churchyard.
3. Individually designed memorials of a high artistic standard are encouraged, subject to DAC recommendation for approval.
4. Skilled craftsmen with experience in stonework and letter carving should be employed.
5. Care should be taken that the design and inscription reflect the respect for the person interred.
6. Central memorials should follow the Chancellor's rules and the advice and policy in the DAC Guidance Booklet on Cremated Remains Areas.
7. Existing monuments in churchyards are, wherever possible, to be preserved in their original position.
8. A Faculty is required for moving a monument or headstone and for reordering of churchyards.

**This is one of a series of guidelines published by the  
Diocesan Advisory Committee**

**Copies can be downloaded from the Diocesan website:**

**[www.chelmsford.anglican.org/parishes/dac/dac\\_notes](http://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/parishes/dac/dac_notes)**

**or can be obtained from the  
DAC Secretary at the address below**

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