

Diocese of Winchester

1. Upright headstones should be:
 - (a) No more than 4 feet (1200mm) high (measured from the surface of the ground), or less than 2 feet 6 inches (750mm) high (measured from the surface of the ground);
 - (b) No more than 3 feet (900mm) wide, or less than 1 foot 8 inches (500mm) wide; (c) No more than 6 inches (150mm) thick, or less than 3 inches (75mm) thick, except in the case of slate memorials which may be thinner, but no less than 1.5 inches (38mm) thick.

1. For a child the headstone may be smaller, but should be no less than 2 feet (600mm) high, 1 foot 3 inches (375mm) wide and 2 inches (50mm) thick.

2. Horizontal stones or ledgers should be no larger than 7 feet (2100mm) by 3 feet (900mm), including the base. They may be either flush with the ground, set at a slight angle to enable rainwater to run off, or raised not more than 9 inches (225mm). Any base should extend no more than 3 inches (75mm) all round and itself be flush with the turf. It is not permitted to have both an upright headstone and a ledger stone on the same grave.

3. Headstones may be of three types:
 - (a) So shaped that they can be inserted directly into the ground at sufficient depth to Ensure stability
 - (b) On an integral base, no more than 9 inches (225mm) high, 3 feet (900mm) wide Or projecting 4 inches (100mm) in any direction;
 - (c) On a vase base, no more than 4 inches (100mm) on either side; the base being no more than 1 foot 3 inches (375mm) front to back.

4. These measurements are no more than guidelines which will be familiar to every reputable stonemason. It is only when a proposed design departs significantly from the standard dimensions that permission will need to be sought from the Chancellor/Archdeacon.

PARTICULAR DESIGNS OR FEATURES:

1. The standard guidelines do not include memorials in the shape of a heart or an open book, or with kerbed surrounds. Memorials in the shape of a heart give a particularly sentimental impression. A churchyard memorial should not look like a St Valentine's Day card. Those in the shape of an open book have been traditionally discouraged, although there would now seem to be no good reason in principle against a memorial in

this shape. Kerbed surrounds used to be popular, but they often contain chippings which birds scatter over the grass.

2. In many churchyards, however, designs or features of this kind have at some stage been allowed, almost invariably without faculty permission. In such circumstances, Incumbents occasionally ask for, and are sometimes given, specific permission to allow new memorials of this kind at their discretion. Where this authority has been granted, it is important that local stonemasons should be informed. Alternatively, if faculty permission is requested for a new memorial of this kind, account is always taken of the proposed site in relation to similar existing memorials. But the mere fact that there are memorials of this kind in a churchyard, or in part of a churchyard, is no guarantee that faculty permission will be granted. All depends on the particular circumstances, and the application of the general principle set out in Paragraph B(2) above. In the case of a proposal for an open book memorial, provided the stone is of an acceptable material and sitting on a proper base flush with the ground, faculty permission is likely to be granted. The suggested dimensions are: 2 feet (600mm) by 1 foot 6 inches (450mm) by 3 inches (75mm) on a 2 feet 2 inches (650mm) by 1 foot 3 inches (375mm) base.
3. Similar considerations apply to proposals for memorials in highly polished dark granite, in synthetic stone or in marble which require faculty permission because they are outside the standard guidelines. Memorials of this kind have become very popular in municipal cemeteries in recent years. Unfortunately, polished black or red granite, or white marble, tends to stand out in a churchyard. Such stone rarely blends well with the church itself, and looks out of place amongst memorials made from the more traditional kinds of stone used in Hampshire and Dorset. The contrast between Purbeck limestone, on the one hand, and polished black granite on the other, can seem very uncomfortable and off-putting. So the fact that memorials of the latter kind may already exist in a churchyard is no indication that another one will be permitted. All depends on the particular circumstances.
4. Subject to any other consideration, a memorial in the following types of stone does not require faculty permission: Limestone – Portland, Purbeck, Derbyshire, York, Hopton, Nabresina, French, Portuguese; Slate – Light Grey, Blue/Black, Green; Granite – Light Grey, Granite in Blue or Rustenburg (Charcoal) Grey is also permitted, provided the stone is rubbed to a matt finish rather than polished.
5. Memorials in the form of a natural boulder taken straight from a quarry are becoming quite common. With a single, sloped face to carry the inscription, the result may well be attractive and pleasing. Faculty permission for such a memorial must be sought.
6. Under no circumstances will a photograph, etched photograph or ceramic portrait of the deceased be permitted on a churchyard memorial without a faculty; and the prospect of a faculty being granted in the present climate of opinion is extremely unlikely. Such items may be common enough abroad, but they are not part of the

English tradition and tend to become unsightly when exposed to our damp climate. To put it another way, they are out of harmony with the overall appearance of the average churchyard. The same principle applies to stone, concrete, metal, plaster or plastic objects, such as model people, animals or toys, and to windmills or jangling trinkets designed to make a noise when the wind blows. No such object may be permitted on a grave without a faculty, and such a faculty is most unlikely to be granted. The fact that this kind of object has become quite common in municipal cemeteries (particularly on the graves of children) does not make it acceptable in a churchyard.

7. Engraving an image on to a headstone raises different considerations. In recent years it has become fashionable and, perhaps, generally acceptable for a stonemason to be asked to engrave a motif on a headstone. Frequently the motif is a traditional Christian symbol such as the Cross or a fish, or decorative items such as flowers. Sometimes, however, the engraving reflects something of particular interest in the life of the person who has died, such as a dog, a bird, a fishing rod, a tractor, a musical instrument or a motorcycle. Provided the motif is small and well carved, there can be no intrinsic objection. After all, our churches are full of small, often irreverent, but interesting designs and symbols, which can be seen in gargoyles, stained-glass windows and misericords. If, however, the proposed engraving is comparatively large, faculty permission must be sought; and it can be said with some degree of confidence that, even in the twenty first century, permission is unlikely to be granted for a headstone dominated by a proposed engraving of an electric guitar, a teddy bear or a sports car, however much the object in question featured in the life of the deceased individual. Nor is permission likely to be granted for large painted engravings. Small painted engravings may be acceptable, but care should be taken to choose a colour or colours which blend in well with the surroundings. A proposal for a bright, perhaps brash, colour should be referred to the Chancellor/Archdeacon for consideration.
8. Any proposed memorial with railings, chains, chippings or glass shades must be authorised by faculty.
9. In past times objection has sometimes been taken to a headstone in the shape of a Cross. This is no longer the position. Provided the size is not unduly large, any proposal for a well designed cross, including a Celtic cross, to form a headstone can be granted by an incumbent provided it is referred to the Archdeacon before hand.
10. 10. A temporary wooden cross to mark a grave may be allowed by an Incumbent without faculty. If it is intended that a wooden cross should be a permanent memorial, faculty permission must be sought.

INSCRIPTIONS:

1. An inscription should aim to be the most appropriate in all the circumstances and to commemorate accurately the existence of the person who has died. It should,

therefore, record either his or her full name or else the surname and the Christian name by which he or she was generally known (for example “Thomas Joseph Smith” or “Thomas Smith”). Today there can be no reasonable objection to including, as well, any particular term of affection or widely-used nickname (“Dad” or “Tommy”), perhaps in brackets or inverted commas.

2. Secondly, however, a name on its own says little. A memorial is possibly the only place to say something publicly about the person who has died. It may, therefore, be appropriate to record what he/she did (“farmer in this village for fifty years”) or some feature of his/her character (“a much-loved father and grandfather” or “a kind and gentle daughter”). And some may wish to add a scriptural text, or an extract from a poem, or some other suitable phrase.
3. Trite or over-sentimental expressions on headstones should be discouraged, if possible. It is recognised, however, that this may not be easy. Whereas even fifty years ago many biblical or literary quotations were familiar to a broad cross-section of the population, this is probably true no longer. Nowadays, phrases picked up from popular songs (“He did it his way”), or television shows, may well be in the minds of grieving relatives – witness the “Deaths” columns in local newspapers. So, an understanding, sensitive approach from the Incumbent is to be encouraged. Careful, yet diplomatic, persuasion may be needed before agreement is reached upon an appropriate wording. In undertaking this sometimes-difficult task, the Incumbent should point out that memorials in churchyards are of a relatively permanent nature and, by their inscriptions, ought to reflect wherever possible the Christian approach to life and death. It should be emphasised that, simply because a grieving relative doggedly insists on a particular expression, no Incumbent must feel obliged to agree to an inscription on a headstone which he or she genuinely feels is inappropriate. If at the end of the day no agreement can be reached, the matter should be referred to the Chancellor/Archdeacon for resolution.
4. Inscriptions should be incised into the stone or carved in relief. The purpose of painting cut lettering is to make the inscription more easily legible over a longer period. If a headstone is regularly cleaned, however, an unpainted inscription may remain legible for a very long time – witness the graves maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Inscriptions may be painted black or white or in a colour that harmonises or blends in with the underlying stone. Until now, gold-painted or gilded lettering has not been permitted, but this rule has been honoured in the breach more than in the observance. Gold lettering is now used extensively in municipal cemeteries and has been applied, without faculty permission, to headstones in many churchyards. A continuing blanket ban is therefore unrealistic. Incumbents now have the discretion to permit gold lettering. In exercising that discretion the Incumbent should bear in mind that, because of damp and frost, gold-painted or gilded lettering may deteriorate quite rapidly, particularly in low-lying churchyards. Where there is a real risk of this happening in

relation to any particular headstone, an Incumbent may quite reasonably refuse permission, and inform the Chancellor/Archdeacon of the reason for such refusal. Before any decision is made in future, an Incumbent should take the opportunity to discuss with the deceased's relatives and/or the stonemason any proposed painting of the inscription and if they have any doubt they should feel free to contact the Archdeacon. If the Incumbent considers that gold-painted or gilded lettering, if proposed, is for whatever reason inappropriate in the circumstances, the matter should be referred without delay to the Chancellor/Archdeacon. Remember that the Chancellor can order the removal of an offending inscription or painted inscription, if the deceased's relatives have gone ahead and instructed the mason to undertake the work, without the Incumbent's consent, and in circumstances where the Chancellor agrees with the Incumbent that the work in question is inappropriate.

5. No advertisement or trademark may be inscribed on the face of a headstone. The stonemason's name may, however, be discreetly inscribed on the side or on the reverse. Affixing a small plastic plate with the stonemason's name to the reverse of the headstone is not permitted.

For more information go to:

<https://www.winchester.anglican.org/documents/chancellors-regulations-churchyards/>

Our stonemasons will advise you the rules and regulations correctly according to the burial ground/authority your family headstone is located. If you have any questions regarding regulations please get in touch with us.