



# **Churchyard Grave Memorials**

**Easters, Rodings and  
Great Canfield**

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## FURTHER INFORMATION

This booklet is a *simplified version* of the comprehensive guidance produced by the Diocese of Chelmsford which covers all matters relating to our burials and interment of ashes in our churchyards.

CHURCHYARD HANDBOOK: *A guide to the rules relating to burial, interment of cremated remains, and other matters relating to churchyards. Revised Edition, March 2020*

A copy of the Churchyard Handbook is available from The Diocesan Office. It is also downloadable from The Diocesan Website

[https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/uploads/dac-docs/Churchyard\\_Handbook\\_March\\_2020\\_Edition.pdf](https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/uploads/dac-docs/Churchyard_Handbook_March_2020_Edition.pdf)

## **1. Our Churchyards**

We are blessed with 10 historic churches; each has its own unique churchyard and all are open for burials and interments of ashes. These churchyards are special places, and their ambience comes from the churches themselves, the surroundings and from the memorials which tell the history of the communities that rest here.

We want our churchyards to be a place of peace and natural beauty, where family and friends can come to recall memories of loved ones. Please help us to maintain our churchyards for those who visit now and in the future, by following the regulations published by the Diocese and set out in this booklet.

Each of the Parochial Church Councils (PCC) is responsible for their respective churchyards.

## **2. Churchyard Handbook Regulations**

Chelmsford Diocese has produced a set of regulations which we are required to follow to ensure that the special qualities found in our churchyards are retained and enhanced when new additions are made. From time to time the regulations change, and you cannot assume that the features or materials of existing memorials and graves in the churchyard will necessarily be permitted now.

Churchyards are different from other burial grounds such as cemeteries or crematoriums. When a burial has taken place in a churchyard, the relatives do not acquire ownership of the grave or the right to erect any headstone or memorial, or to plant the surface. Permission in writing has to be obtained in each case.

This is because the churchyard is “consecrated”, which means that it is holy ground dedicated to the service of God. Consecrated ground cannot be bought or sold. It always belongs to the Church, and the Church is responsible and legally liable for its maintenance. It follows that the Church must ensure it is a safe place for the public to visit, and for the volunteers and people employed to work there.

### **3. What do the Regulations in this booklet apply to?**

The information in this booklet applies to:

- burials in new graves and existing graves; and
- the interment of cremated remains in new and existing graves.

A separate booklet is available for memorials relevant to the interment of ashes in areas set aside for cremated remains. This is because the memorials permitted in these areas vary from church to church.

### **4. What happens to the grave immediately after the burial?**

It will take approximately six months to a year after the burial, depending on the weather and the time of year, for the ground to settle. Once the grave has settled it will be levelled and grassed over.

In some of our churchyards, the grave area may be used as an area for planting bulbs or small annual plants. Shrubs, larger plants or trees must not be planted. Please check with the relevant church for confirmation.

No permanent memorial is permitted until at least six months after the date of burial. Our churches allow the Funeral Directors to place a small wooden temporary cross on the grave at the time of burial. The cross should be no larger than 380mm (15ins) high by 305mm (12ins) wide and should have a natural wood colouring.

PLEASE NOTE: The temporary cross must be removed when a permanent memorial is erected. If a permanent memorial is not erected the cross may remain on the grave. However, if its condition deteriorates it will then be removed. Permission must be sought from the Priest-in-Charge to replace it.

### **5. How and when can we apply for permission to erect a memorial**

It is essential to apply for permission before erecting a memorial of any kind.

The Chancellor (the Bishop's legal advisor) has delegated to the Priest-in-Charge power within his/her sole discretion to permit headstones and other memorials for persons whose remains are buried or interred in the churchyard, provided that they are in accordance with the regulations.

A special form (CR1) has to be used to make this application and this can be obtained from most stonemasons, funeral directors or from the churches. Until this form has been submitted and the application has been approved in writing, no permanent memorial can be placed in the churchyard.

A fee is payable on submission of the CR1 application.

Anything which does not meet with the diocesan regulations must be submitted through a Faculty process. If after consultation with the Priest-in-Charge this is required the church will assist you in the application process and completion of the paperwork, which requires agreement of the local Parochial Church Council as well as the Chancellor. There is a fee for this process, which is a legal and lengthy one and a favourable outcome cannot be assumed.

Please note, it is not possible to place a memorial for persons whose remains are not laid to rest in the churchyard.

## **6. Grave Memorials – What type of memorial can we have?**

Our churches are listed as being of special architectural or historic interest under the planning legislation. Care has to be taken to ensure that nothing incongruous or detrimental to that setting is introduced into the churchyard

The following is extracted from the Chelmsford Diocese churchyard handbook, if you are unsure about any of the guidance, please refer to the handbook for further information.

*Shape:* Headstones must have straight parallel sides, (rustic cut sides are not permitted) and the top should be straight or curved.

*Size:* Memorials must not exceed 1070mm (3ft 6ins) in height measured from the surface of the ground, or 1220mm (4ft) for a monolith type memorial.

They must not exceed 760mm (2ft 6ins) in width and 102mm (4ins) in thickness.

*Vase:* A single flower vase is permitted to be incorporated into a base of the headstone and may extend a maximum of 202mm (8ins) in front of the headstone. No other vase is permitted. Plastic and glass vases are not permitted for safety reasons.

*Finish:* The stone must be unpolished or honed (which is the stage before final polishing), it must not be polished or finished in any manner which gives an effect similar to that of polished.

*Type of stone:* You may choose from slate (which lends itself to inscription in a flowing script), or from the following stones. Limestone: Blue Lias, Chilmark, Hopton Wood, Hornton, Nabresina, Oathill Cotswold Cream, Portland, Purbeck Pond Freestone, Purbeck Thornback. Sandstones: Caithness Stone, Dukes, Forest of Dean, Peakmoor, Scotch Buff, Stoneraise Red, Wattscliffe Lilac, West Stone, Yorkstone, Grey Granite. Any other stones such as marble, or synthetic stones, cannot be permitted on a form CR1 application.

*Decoration:* Some decoration is permissible providing it is appropriate for a headstone being placed on sacred ground, this includes Christian symbols, (including a small cross, a Bible, or the ICTHUS sign), a single flower or a spray of flowers or other plant (such as ears of corn), an emblem of appropriate scale commemorating a person who served in one of the Armed Forces, provided that written evidence is produced to prove the entitlement of the deceased person to use that emblem. If you wish to use a decorative design, which illustrates the profession, occupation, special skill or interest of the deceased person, a faculty will be required.

*Inscription:* A memorial stone is a record of the life of the person commemorated and there has to be formality in relation to the names and dates of birth and death of the person concerned. The person's names are not allowed to be abbreviated but if he or she was usually known by a particular name then this name can be added in inverted commas after the Christian name, provided that the Priest-in-Charge who is giving permission, considers it appropriate. Well-known descriptions of endearment only familiar and used within the family concerned are not likely to be appropriate and cannot be approved on a CR1 form. As a general rule the inscription is in

English, not in another language. This is because it needs to be capable of being read and understood by visitors to the churchyard. Website and other electronic communication details i.e. twitter, quick response (QR) codes on headstones are not permitted.

*Incising:* The most lasting way of inscribing a headstone is to incise the letters into the stone. The colour should be black or such other colour as the Priest-in-Charge considers appropriate.

## **7. What flowers can be placed or planted on a grave Flowers?**

Our preference is the grave is left as grass which ensures it is easy to maintain. However, in some of our churchyards (please check locally) and if they wish families are able to plant spring bulbs or other small plants on graves, but not shrubs, bushes or trees. If plants get too big they may be pruned back or removed without consultation.

Where a flower vase is included in the base of the headstone, fresh flowers or cuttings from shrubs or bushes, such as holly, may be placed in the flower vase at the base of the headstone.

Please remove the plastic wrapping around flowers if you lay them on a grave as plastic wrappers can be dangerous to wildlife.

## **8. What flowers cannot be placed or planted on a grave?**

No plastic or artificial flowers of any kind are allowed. This is because they are not in keeping with the changing seasons of nature which apply in the churchyard. They may serve a useful purpose as decoration in other places but the objective in the churchyard, which is a holy place, is to have flowers and plants which grow naturally.

There are three limited exceptions:

- (1) Poppies at Remembrance Sunday; they serve a special purpose for a limited period at a time of National Remembrance.
- (2) Wreaths at Christmas to be removed after 31 January.
- (3) Wreaths at the anniversary of the death of the deceased, for a limited period of two weeks.

If you are unable to make a return visit, the PCC will remove dead flowers and wreaths.

### **9. Can I place additional items on a grave?**

Additional memorial stones and vases are no longer permitted (from changes introduced in 1993). However, it should be noted that regulations are not applied retrospectively.

Mementos - No other kinds of ornament, toys, balloons, candles, lights, pictures or garden ornaments are permitted on any grave in the churchyard.

Items that are left on the graves can be moved by wildlife and the weather. Loose items can be dangerous, they can make mowing difficult and become trapped in the machinery.

### **10. Can I put kerbing around the grave or add chippings?**

Over the passage of years kerbs deteriorate and become partially or wholly sunken into the ground or broken. They present a safety hazard and create difficulty for those maintaining the churchyard with modern equipment.

Since January 2011 it is no longer permissible to place edgings (kerbs) around graves, or to put wood or stone chippings on the graves. However, those placed prior to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010 were allowed to remain provided,

- 1) they did not become a safety hazard, and/or
- 2) that they did not exceed the permitted size of a grave.

### **11. Whose responsibility is it to maintain a headstone?**

Should a headstone become damaged or show signs of weathering, it is the responsibility of the family to maintain it. However, the Priest-in-Charge must be consulted before any action is carried out.

Under the terms of Public Liability Insurance the Priest-in-Charge must take action to remove any foreseeable danger to the public. In the absence of the family taking action, it is the duty of the Priest-in-Charge to take any action necessary to ensure the safety of the public.