



The Church of England  

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Diocese of Ely

# The Churchyard Regulations

A Guide for Families and  
Next-of-Kin

## The Purpose of this Guide

The church fully understands and appreciates what a difficult task is faced by the family and next-of-kin when deciding how to mark the final resting place of the human remains of a cherished family member or friend.

Decisions have to be made when you may still be grieving. One of the reasons why a headstone cannot be erected until at least six months has passed is to allow you time and space before making these decisions.

Having decided that the burial should take place in a Churchyard and in consecrated ground, the design of what you wish to put in the Churchyard is subject to compliance with the Churchyard Regulations.

The reasons for having Churchyard Regulations are explained in the “Guidance to the Rules” which can be obtained from the Minister or found on the Diocesan website.

In most cases this does not present a problem; your design is likely to conform with the Regulations and the Minister has the authority to approve your design of the monument, ledger stone or memorial stone.

However, there may be circumstances in which what you want does not conform with the Regulations in which case you will have to apply to the Chancellor of the Diocese for a faculty to ask for permission to allow your design to be used.

Whilst the Chancellor may permit some variation from the Regulations, it is unlikely that he will be able to permit a design that flies in the face of his own Regulations.

The best person to consult for guidance and support is the Minister in charge of the church at which the burial took place. You will also have a funeral director or stone mason to help you but please ensure that they are familiar with the Churchyard Regulations.

What follows is a summary of what is and what is not permitted without a faculty which we hope you will find useful.

It is expressed largely in the negative, that is what is not allowed, because it is quicker to do so than to express what are the vast array of designs and materials which are permitted. Any guidance given here is subject to the Chancellor’s interpretation of the Churchyard Regulations themselves.

## Size

A monument (headstone) cannot be more than 1220mm (4ft) high from the ground, 914mm (3ft) wide and 150mm (6in) thick, and no smaller than 500mm (1ft 8in) high, 380mm (1ft 3in) wide, and 76mm (3in) thick. Slate monuments may be thinner but not less than 38mm (1½in) thick.

A cross cannot be more than 1520mm (5ft) high, from the ground. There are technical rules governing how the monument is supported and as to the measurements of the concrete base which are set out in the Regulations

A ledger stone, which lies flat along the length and width of the grave, may be introduced, as an alternative to, but not in addition to, a monument.

A memorial stone, placed to mark cremated remains, cannot be larger than 533mm (21in) by 533mm (21in). It can be rectangular or square. You must check whether the church at which the remains are to be interred permits a stone to be laid; not all churches do.

## Design of Monuments & Ledger Stones

A monument or ledger stone must not take the form of a statue or of a particular object such as a heart, a person, animal or other figure or be in the form of a book.

It cannot include any lighting, whether electric or otherwise, or any glass shades. Portraits, photographs or other images of an individual are not permitted. Mouldings, video or sound recordings, QR codes or other machine-readable labels, kerbs or other fencing, railings or other demarcation, and stone or glass chippings are not permitted.

A black, white or uncoloured etching or carving may be permitted provided that it is reverent and not indicative of beliefs contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England, and so long as it does not depict an individual, and only covers a part of the surface of the monument or ledger stone.

Etchings of, for example, vehicles, sports equipment, mechanical equipment, and places of work or leisure may not be considered to be reverent.

## Materials

A monument, ledger stone, or cross can be made of natural stone or hardwood. A cross may also be made of wrought iron.

The surface of the stone must not be made reflective by being polished or finely honed. The stone should normally be a local stone which reflects the colours of the stone of the church building.

It cannot be, or appear to be black, blue, red or green or otherwise brightly coloured, or of coloured or mottled granite, nor any granite darker than Karin Grey. It cannot be made of marble, synthetic stone or plastic, and it cannot be painted.

A monument, ledger stone, cross or memorial stone may be in Welsh Black or Westmoreland Green slate.

## Inscriptions

Inscriptions must be simple and reverent, and preferably (but not necessarily) of Biblical or liturgical origin. They may include suitable literary sources.

Nicknames or familiar names may be allowed, but you should speak to your Minister about it. No advertisement or trademark can be inscribed.

## Flowers and other Memorabilia

Artificial flowers are not allowed. Wreaths and cut flowers can remain until they wither. Trees and shrubs should not be planted on or around a grave. A separate faculty will need to be sought for this. Details of how to apply for a faculty can be found on the Diocesan website.

With the permission of the Minister, some toys or similar objects may be left at the place of burial or interment for up to 12 months.

Please contact your Parish Priest or Churchwarden (in the case of a vacancy) to discuss your wishes further.

You will also find further useful information on the Diocesan and Registry websites, both linked below.

**The Ely Diocesan website**

<http://www.elydiocese.org/supporting-parishes/church-buildings-and-dac/churchyards-and-memorials>

**Ely Diocesan Registry's website**

<http://www.elydiocesanregistry.co.uk/faculty-jurisdiction/memorials>