



A HANDBOOK FOR THE BEREAVED

Guidance for bereaved families
wishing to apply for a burial or
interment of ashes in any of our
churchyards, or to place a
memorial



DIOCESE OF **YORK**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Churchyards form part of our history. They matter to many people, especially those whose loved ones' remains rest there, but they are also important to parishioners, historians, ecologists, visitors and others. They are consecrated ground, set aside for burials, and are places for quiet contemplation and remembrance.

To help protect their special character, the Diocesan Churchyard General Regulations and Churchyard Memorial Regulations ("the Regulations") give guidance on what is allowed in the churchyard and what memorials should look like.

2. RIGHT TO BURIAL

Anyone who was a parishioner living in the parish at the date of death, or anyone who died in the parish, can be buried in the churchyard (regardless of whether they were a member of the Church of England or even Christian). Subject to the location being determined by the minister they can have:

- a coffin burial if there is space available, or
- their cremated remains can be buried in an area set aside for such burials, or in a space which is too small for coffin burial, or in the existing grave of a family member.

Burial spaces can also be reserved; please contact the Diocesan Registry for details: 01904 687530 or registryyork@flintbishop.co.uk

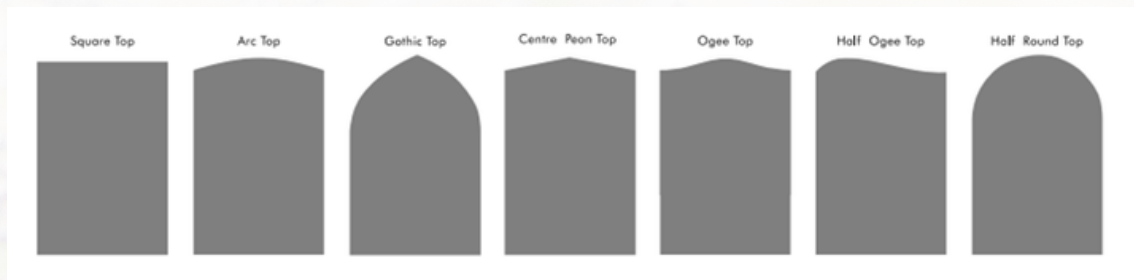
It is important to remember that the family of the deceased do not own the land in which a body is buried (the grave) or the plot in which cremated remains are buried - the land remains part of the churchyard. As churchyards need maintenance and are often cared for by volunteers, graves must be flat and kept clear of obstructions so that the grass can easily be cut, so graves may not be marked out by chippings, kerbs, chains, railings, fences or anything similar.

Although families do not own the grave space, they do own any memorial placed over the burial and are responsible for its upkeep and repair. A coffin burial may be marked with a headstone and a burial of ashes with a flat memorial tablet.

3. HEADSTONES

Coffin burials may be marked with upright headstones. Care must be taken to see that new headstones fit with their surroundings, so native natural stone is preferred, whilst polished granite or marble and artificial materials are not permitted (see the Churchyard Memorial Regulations for acceptable materials and finishes).

Headstones must be simple in shape. Examples:



Designs such as stone crosses, hearts and open books are not permitted.

Inscriptions should be composed with care as a gravestone in a churchyard is a public memorial in a public place and may be there for a long time. Simple inscriptions – full names, dates and family relationships (father/ mother/ husband/wife/ etc) – are the most dignified. Any additional words should be accurate, uncontroversial and not incompatible with the Christian faith.

Motifs, emblems or other images must comply with the Churchyard Memorial Regulations (and please note that some emblems and images will require permission from the copyright owner).

Two integral flower receptacles, flush with the top of the headstone's base, are permitted.

If the headstone chosen by the family is in accordance with the Churchyard Memorial Regulations, then permission for it to be installed can be given by the church minister. If it is not, an application must be made to the Diocesan Chancellor for faculty permission (see below).

4. CREMATED REMAINS TABLETS

Burials of ashes, either in an area set aside for the burial of cremated remains, or in the existing grave of a close relative, may be marked by a flat stone tablet or plaque laid flush with the ground. An integral flower receptacle, flush with the tablet or ground surface, is permitted.

Alternatively, when ashes are buried in the grave of a close relative, an inscription can be added to an existing headstone.

Upright memorials and desktop memorials are not permitted.

5. TEMPORARY MARKERS

A small wooden cross can be installed as a temporary marker pending the installation of a permanent memorial.

6. PLACING ITEMS ON GRAVES

Families and friends may wish to visit graves and leave behind floral or other tributes to their loved ones. In order to keep churchyards looking at their best for all visitors, some items are not permitted.

Items which **may** be placed on a grave include:

- Cut flowers – these must be removed as soon as they start to wither
- Removable flower container (not glass) recessed completely into the ground
- Silk flowers – these must be removed when they become faded, dirty, dishevelled or discoloured
- Spring bulbs - these may be planted in the soil of the grave
- Easter and Christmas wreaths and Remembrance Day poppies – these should be removed after a period of not more than 2 months

Items which **may not** be placed on a grave include:

- Trees, shrubs, planted annual or perennial flowers – a grave should not take on a cultivated or garden appearance
- Separate free-standing flower vases or containers
- Artificial flowers (other than silk flowers as above)
- Angel or dove statuettes
- Garden ornaments, bird baths, solar lights or decorations
- Pictures
- Textiles or clothes
- Food or drink
- Personal belongings or memorabilia (and this includes toys or teddy bears).

If any such items are placed upon a grave then they will be removed

7. FACULTY PERMISSION

If the proposed design of the headstone or cremated remains tablet does not comply with the Churchyard Memorial Regulations so the church minister is unable to give permission for it, you will have to apply to the Diocesan Chancellor for faculty permission.

Please email the Diocesan Registry at registryyork@flintbishop.co.uk or ring 01904 687530 and they will supply you with the correct application form and confirm the application fee payable.

Your completed application form will be passed on to the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC) for consideration and they will advise the Chancellor whether, in their view, faculty permission should be granted. Public Notices including details of your application will have to be displayed at the church for at least 30 days.

If there are no objections and if the Chancellor is satisfied that your proposed memorial should be allowed, then they will grant a faculty.

8. RELEVANT LINKS

Funerals

<https://dioceseofyork.org.uk/faith-life/life-events/funerals/>

After a Funeral - more support

<https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/funerals/after-funeral>

Churchyard General Regulations

Churchyard Memorial Regulations

Churchyard Memorial Application Form

Jesus said:
Do not let your hearts be troubled.
You believe in God; believe also in me.
In my Father's house are many rooms;
if it were not so, I would have told you;
for I go to prepare a place for you (John 14.2)

Father,
you know our hearts and share our sorrows.
We are hurt by our parting from those whom we loved:
when we are angry at the loss we have sustained,
when we long for words of comfort, yet find them hard to hear,
turn our grief to truer living, our affliction to firmer hope
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen



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