

# Churchyard Monuments



## Remembrance

Christian Burial is the act by which the mortal remains of a person are laid to rest until the Day of Resurrection. Meanwhile it is good to mourn the departed, to remember them with thanksgiving and to reflect on our own mortality.

A memorial stone is by no means essential. Burials in Churchyards are always recorded in Church registers. The best form of remembrance is in prayers, sacrament and witness, or by a gift to the Church which can be a useful and worthy memorial.

## Churchyards

Churchyards like the Churches within them are an important part of local and national heritage. They are often rich in historical, natural and artistic interest. Preservation of their particular character and beauty in the local environment is desirable.

The Church and Churchyard go together even though they may be detached from each other. No monument should ever be placed in a Churchyard which by reason of design, colour or material is obtrusive and blemishes the harmony and environment of the place.

## The Law

Like the Church the Churchyard is 'owned' by the Incumbent, who holds it as a trustee for the benefit of all the parishioners past, present and future. The Parochial Church Council has the responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the Churchyard in co-operation with the Incumbent.

The Churchyard is subject to faculty jurisdiction. The Churchwardens are the officers of the Ordinary (the Bishop of the Diocese) in the parish and are responsible for ensuring that the law, proper practices and procedures are complied with.

Every parishioner or person on the electoral roll of the parish at the time of death has a legal right to burial in the Churchyard, if the same is open for burials. Cremated remains may nevertheless be buried in a closed or disused Churchyard, providing that a faculty is obtained from the Consistory Court. Remember that no-one has any right whatsoever to introduce any monument into the Churchyard: this remains a granted privilege.

Those who are privileged to erect a monument and their heirs-in-law are responsible for the upkeep of that monument.

## The Reasons for these Procedures

Historically monuments were usually simple headstones (with no above-surface bases), stone or wood crosses, and some edifices specially authorised by faculty. Much of the stone used was local, similar to that of the church. From about the turn of the C20th century unsuitable materials were introduced such as monuments with harsh un-natural colours, sometimes highly polished, often kerbs and chippings, which spoilt the aesthetic environment and increased maintenance problems.

Complaint was such that the Church Assembly set up a commission to investigate the matter in depth. By its 1953 Report every Diocese was recommended to introduce control to prevent further deterioration of the environment. These new procedures set the bounds within which a monument is considered acceptable subject to the consent of the Incumbent. Anything else requires faculty authority. It may or may not be permitted by the Court according to the special circumstances.