

Having a burial in St George's Churchyard

Some helpful information and conditions of use

You should receive with this letter details of the terms and conditions to do with burials in St George's churchyard, but these notes are intended to give an overview of the conditions.

Memorials and Headstones

- You should apply to the Church Office for permission to erect a headstone.
We advise you not to enter into a contract or accept an estimate from a funeral director or Monumental Mason until permission is given.
- You will have to wait for at least six months before having a headstone placed to mark the grave.
This is to give the ground a chance to settle so that the headstone will be more stable.
- Any monument or headstone and the inscription upon it must be approved by Durham Diocese.
Although they will always try to be helpful, the Diocese can choose to not allow a certain type of monument or inscription to be erected. Applying for approval of a headstone that comes within the churchyard rules is unlikely to cause any delay as the 6 month delay mentioned above gives plenty of time to seek approval.
Approval is mainly to help maintain the churchyard in a way that makes it a suitable environment for all those who visit it, keeping in mind it is Christian consecrated land.
- All proposed monuments need to be approved, but certain types of headstones are easier for us to approve:
 - ❖ Monuments made of hardwood, or unpolished slate or grey granite
 - ❖ Monuments with lettering simply engraved (not gilded)
 - ❖ Monuments of a simple shape
 - ❖ Monuments with simple, reverent inscriptions
- If you later want to add to an inscription on an existing headstone, you must receive a separate permission.
- All monuments have to be within certain sizes set out in the Terms and Conditions. You should show the Terms and Conditions to your Monumental Mason.

The Grave

- You are responsible for the upkeep of the grave.
St George's Church and the Council endeavours to keep the rest of the churchyard tidy, but is sometimes limited with resources as the work is done by volunteers.
- No stones or chippings are to be used on the grave. Bark or wood chips are allowed.
This is principally for the safety of those maintaining the churchyard, who sometimes use strimmers.
- No kerb, surround, chain or railing or similar item is to be used as part of the grave.

- Any container for flowers, including vases, that are not part of the headstone plinth itself must be removable and must be buried so that its top is flush with ground level to enable mowers to pass over without danger to workers or vase.
- You are welcome to plant flowers and bulbs in the grave site, but please avoid shrubs, trees and bushes. These tend to grow too large and their roots can undermine headstones.
- Other semi-permanent items such as lights, candlesticks, statues, sundials, memorials, photographic plaques, stones, slabs or artificial turf may not be used.
- Flat stone memorials require extra permission from the chancellor that require clear plans to be submitted and, if granted, must be laid flush with the grass so that use of cutters and trimmers is not affected.
- Certain temporary items, while technically not allowed, may be left for a suitable time. These should not be left on graves permanently as over time they can become unsightly. These include trinkets, toys, memorabilia and other movable items such as photographs, cards and candles. Silk flower should be renewed regularly as over time they fade. *We do recognise that following the burial of a loved one or the installation of a headstone some people place items on graves as a sign of respect and love. Over time these items fade and can become unsightly and upset others who come to remember loved ones so we request that items are removed within 15 months of the burial or sooner if they have become broken, faded or otherwise worn by the elements. We encourage you and friends and family to keep items to a minimum for the sake of all who share our churchyard.*
- The distance between the centres of each grave is approximately 4 feet. Each grave is 3 feet wide. This leaves a 1 foot gap between the graves. *This is to help with the maintenance of the graves and to allow space for mourners to stand.*

We hope you will have no problems with the churchyard or grave.

If any grave is found that does not conform with the above information or the terms and conditions, the church will do its best to contact the next of kin to sort the problem. If the next of kin cannot be contacted, or the problem cannot be resolved, the church has every legal right to and will take action to remove anything not in accordance with the terms.

One of our churchyard team did have his leg cut open by a plastic toy left on a grave as he was strimming. If any item is considered by those who maintain the churchyard to be a risk to health and safety, we reserve the right to remove it immediately.

Sadly, a number of people have taken advantage of a gracious attitude towards the way graves have been tended and if people continue to abuse the privilege of having loved ones buried in the churchyard, the rules set by the diocese may have to be enforced more rigorously.

If you have any questions about this information or the terms and conditions, please get in touch with the Church Office 0191 415 4200 (Tues 9.00am-12.00 noon, Wed 12.00 noon-3.00pm, Fri 9.00am-12.00noon).

Please note that there is no transfer of property rights when burying someone in a churchyard. All land remains the property of the church and there is no legal right to erect any headstone, nor add any other item without express permission from the chancellor.

Diocese of Durham – Churchyard Rules – Terms and Conditions

Monuments or tomb stones conforming exactly with the following provisions may be introduced into a churchyard with the written permission of the Incumbent (or Priest-in-Charge, Team Vicar or Rural Dean where the benefice is vacant).

- i) No headstone may be erected within 1200mm (4 feet) of the outer wall of the church or of any other building attached thereto.
- ii) A headstone shall be no more than 1200mm (4 feet) high, measured from the surface of the ground, 900mm (3 feet) wide and 150mm (6 inches) thick and no less than 750mm (2 feet 6 inches) high, 500mm (1 foot 8 inches) wide and 75mm (3 inches) thick. Slate memorials may be thinner than 75mm (3 inches) but no less than 38mm (1½ inches).
- iii) A base forming an integral part of the design of the headstone may be permitted provided that it does not project more than 100mm (4 inches) beyond the headstone in any direction, save that where a receptacle for flowers is provided the receptacle shall be flush with the top of the base and may extend up to 200mm (8 inches) in front of the headstone. In all cases, due regard must be paid to the nature of the ground and the problem of settlement.
- iv) Any burial without a headstone may have a horizontal stone ledger 225mm (9 inches) square set flush with the turf and bearing a number referenced to a plan kept in the church safe. The said plan shall be produced to the Archdeacon, or to such person authorised in writing in that behalf by me or by the Diocesan Registrar, on reasonable notice given to the Incumbent, Priest-in-Charge, Team Vicar or Rural Dean as the case may be.
- v) Receptacles for flowers shall not be more than 300 x 200 x 200mm (12 x 8 x 8 inches). If the receptacle for flowers is not an integral part of the design of the headstone, it must consist of a removable container sunk completely into the ground.
- vi) Where a part of the churchyard has been set aside for the burial of cremated remains:-
 - a) no monument or receptacle for flowers may be introduced into that area except in accordance with the terms of the Faculty setting the area apart; and
 - b) the erection of a memorial following the interment of cremated remains may only be within that area.
- vii) Except as stated in (viii) below, monuments may be of hardwood or natural indigenous stone or slate. Stones other than those traditionally used in local buildings, or stones in conflict with the stone of the church, may not be used. The stone shall not be mirror polished in any way so as to reflect.

- viii) A monument shall not be of black, blue or red granite nor of all polished granite of whatever colour nor of white marble, synthetic stone or plastic.*¹
- ix) A monument shall not include chippings (whether of stone or otherwise) or glass shades, or any kerb, railing or chain, or any picture, portrait or photograph, or any statuary, bird bath or (save in accordance with (iii) above) any built-in vase container.
- x) Every monument shall be simple in shape. In particular (save by leave of a Faculty) a monument shall not be in the shape of a cross, heart or book.
- xi) Inscriptions must be simple and reverent and any literary quotation must be appropriate to its use within the context of a Christian burial ground. All inscriptions shall be inscribed or in relief; they may be painted a shade lighter or darker than the natural colour of the stone but may not be leaded or gilded. No plastic or inserted lettering may be used.
- xii) Any addition to, or amendment of, an inscription must be the subject of a separate permission and must conform to the above rules as well as being consistent with the original inscription.
- xiii) No advertisement or trademark may be inscribed upon the monument although the name of the mason may be inscribed at the side or on the back in unleaded letters no larger than 13mm (½ inch) in height.
- xiv) No Q.R. (Quick Response) code can be placed on any memorial or ledger without a Faculty

¹ Please note St George's church churchyard has a special dispensation to use black granite because of the number of older headstones that already used this type of stone. There are also some common shapes that have been permitted previously that means we may be able to use them again, dependent on the chancellor of the diocese.