

---

# CHURCHYARD REGULATIONS

For the Parish of St Nicholas Middleton-on-Sea

---



These regulations are drawn from  
The Chancellor's General Directions  
Issue No 4 January 2016

---

## Introduction

Churchyards are an important feature of our rural communities, providing an historic record of successive generations, a home for monuments of architectural and aesthetic excellence, a setting for the church itself (which is an historic listed building), and a place for reflection and prayer. It should be borne in mind that churchyards are different in their nature from municipal cemeteries. Parishioners, those named on the electoral roll, and those dying within the parish all have a legal right of burial in the parochial burial ground. This right is not restricted to the baptised nor to members of the worshipping community.

By seeking a burial in consecrated ground, the bereaved are submitting to the jurisdiction of the consistory court which regulates the type of headstone or other marker which may be erected. This jurisdiction exists for reasons which are in part theological and in part aesthetic, since what may be unobjectionable in a municipal cemetery might be considered inappropriate (or even offensive) in an historic churchyard.

It is unlawful for a monument to be introduced into a churchyard without permission. Generally such permission derives from the chancellor in the form of a faculty. However, for administrative convenience and to minimise expense, the chancellor delegates to the vicar the authority to permit the introduction of a monument provided it is of a type which complies with the detailed provisions contained in these regulations. During an interregnum this authority is exercised by the rural dean. Applications for memorials should generally not be made until six months have passed since the interment. Not merely does this allow the ground to settle, but the passage of time permits a more reflective decision to be made. All close family members need to be consulted and a consensus achieved. The vicar can offer help at this time in making suggestions to the bereaved of the types of memorial which might be introduced. If this conversation precedes a visit to the stonemason it can avoid the difficulty and disappointment engendered by the selection of an inappropriate design from a catalogue. Although the grave itself is the property of the vicar, any memorial will belong to the heir-at-law of the person commemorated and that person carries the duty to maintain it and the legal liability for its safety.

A headstone is a public statement about the person who is being commemorated. Making the right choice of stone, design and inscription is important not only to the relatives or friends who are going to provide the memorial, but also to the wider

---

community because of the effect which the headstone may have upon the appearance of the churchyard. Attractive, well conceived designs by skilled and imaginative craftsmen are encouraged over mass produced designs. Sculpture or other statuary is not discouraged but must be authorised by faculty.

An English churchyard is also a haven for wild flowers and a vital habitat for wildlife. Some areas in less used parts of the churchyard may be left un-mown deliberately to help support a wide variety of wildlife and flowers.

## Headstones

No more than 4ft nor less than 2ft 6in high (1200mm, 750mm)

No more than 3ft nor less than 1ft 8in wide (900mm, 500mm)

Not more than 6in nor less than 3in thick (150mm, 75mm), unless slate is to be used in which case a thickness of 2in is may be permitted.

In the case of infant burials, headstones must be no less than 2ft x 1ft 3in x 2in (600 x 375 x 50mm).

A base forming an integral part of the design of a headstone may be included provided it does not project more than 2in (50mm) beyond the headstone in any direction and provided that it is fixed on a foundation slab of an approved material which itself is fixed flush with the ground and extending 3in to 5in (75 to 125mm) all round so that a mower may freely pass over it. Integral sockets for flower vases are not permitted in headstone bases.

## Materials

The following stone is permitted:

Limestone: Portland Slate: Blue / Black (Cornish)

Purbeck or Horsham Grey / Blue (Welsh)

Derbyshire Green (Westmoreland)

Hopton Wood Granite: Light to medium grey

Hornton Sandstone: York

Nabresina

Caen / Normandy

---

## Appearance

Polished stone or mirror finish is not permitted.

Coloured lettering is not permitted save as follows:

Nabresina limestone may have the lettering picked out in contrasting matt;

Slate may have the lettering picked out in off-white matt;

Granite may have lettering picked out in off-white matt.

## Inscriptions

It is essential that inscriptions are factually accurate and are written in such a way as to be comprehensible by future generations. The wording of inscriptions should interest and inspire the reader. They should be reverent and seemly and avoid the bland. Readers will want to know something of the person commemorated, and descriptions should be fulsome and well expressed.

A memorial stone is not the right place for a statement about how members of the family feel about the deceased nor how they would address him or her were they still alive. The use of pet names should generally be avoided as they can become meaningless and appear trite with the passing of time.

Dates should be expressed in the form 7 August 1965 (or 7 8 65) and both the date of birth and of death should generally be included.

Skilled craftsmen and letter cutters should be used.

Photographs or representations of objects or motifs such as a child's toy are not permitted.

Bronze or ceramic inserts are not to be used. Badges, crests or emblems may be used provided they are seemly and appropriate for the deceased.

Any representation must be designed so that it can be accurately cut by a skilled craftsman.

Masons' or carpenters' names, signs or marks may be inscribed on any monument provided their position and appearance are unobtrusive having regard to the monument as a whole.

---

## Horizontal Ledgers

Either flush with the turf or raised not more than 9in (225mm) above a base, extending not less than 3in (75mm) all round and itself flush with the turf; inclusive measurements not more than 7ft (2100mm) by 3ft (900mm). The type of stone and lettering etc. must comply with the headstone regulations above.

## Crosses

Crosses are not permitted, for they have been too freely used in burial grounds in the past. A simple wooden cross may mark a recent burial. A brass plaque bearing the name and dates of the deceased may be affixed to the cross. Such crosses must be removed upon the erection of a stone memorial or after a period of 18 months, whichever is the sooner.

## Cremated Remains

Cremated remains\* may be buried in the existing grave of a deceased spouse or close family member, or in a specially designated area. When cremated remains are buried in a specially designated area a stone may mark the plot.

**The stone must be: 12in x 12in x 2in (300 x 300 x 50mm).**

The type of stone and lettering etc. must comply with the headstone regulations above. (*See: Material, Appearance, Inscriptions*).

*\* As the churchyard of St Nicholas' Parish has been closed, only cremated remains may be buried in a specially designated area called "The Garden of Remembrance". Cremated remains may be buried in a biodegradable container/urn or strewn into the ground; they may not be scattered nor buried in a non-biodegradable container.*

## Flowers

Bulbs and small annual plants may be placed in the soil of any grave; plants or cut flowers may be placed in a removable sunken container (preferably of unpolished aluminium) in the soil of any grave.

Wreaths and cut flowers placed on graves and plants and flowers in containers may be removed, when withered, by those authorised to do so by the incumbent.

---

No artificial flowers or foliage may be placed on or about graves (except for Remembrance Day poppies) and, if so placed, will be removed.

## Prohibitions

The following are not permitted:

- i. kerbs, railings, fencing or chippings;
- ii. integral sockets in the base of a headstone for a flower vase;
- iii. memorials in the shape of vases, hearts, open books;
- iv. memorials incorporating photographs or portraits;
- v. mementoes, windmills, toys or little animals;
- vi. the use of 'pet names'
- vii. artificial flowers.

**Please note that the vicar has no authority to permit the erection of a memorial which does not comply with these regulations. Any memorial which does not comply with these Regulations may be removed by order of the consistory court.**