

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Churchyard Regulations for the Diocese of Bristol are to be revoked and replaced by the Additional Matters Order set out below. It is not intended that there be any significant change to the type of memorial which may be introduced into churchyards with the authority of parochial clergy. However, the procedure will be different in the future under this Order. Hitherto parochial clergy exercised a power informally delegated to them by Diocesan Chancellors to permit the introduction of memorials falling within defined types and categories. The legal basis for such informal delegation was considered insufficiently robust and there is now an express statutory power under section 78 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018 (as amended) for Diocesan Chancellors to make Additional Matters Orders authorising works to be undertaken in church or churchyards without the need for a faculty, augmenting those matters already included in Lists A and B. This Order therefore permits memorials which comply with the requirements in Schedule 1 to be erected in churchyards provided the minister responsible has granted permission following the procedure in Schedule 2. The process will be familiar to clergy, churchwardens and memorial masons and no substantive changes are involved, but the form to be used (which may be completed electronically) is new. The specifications for qualifying memorials have been altered (in form if not in substance). This represents a co-ordinated response by diocesan chancellors to disquiet expressed at the differences between the diocesan regulations, and the difficulty this caused for clergy moving between dioceses. Instead, a generic pro-forma has been agreed in anticipation of a universal roll-out throughout the Church of England. The pro-forma allows for minor variation particularly in relation to tablets marking the interment of cremated remains and so-called 'open book' memorials. 'Open book' and 'desktop' memorials were excluded from the pre-existing Churchyard Regulations for the Diocese of Bristol and they remain so. Accordingly, they do not appear in Schedule 1 of the Order, and consequential references are also omitted. For convenience, and to ensure consistency with the generic pro-forma and the Orders of other dioceses, where text is omitted the numbering is retained.

GUIDANCE

A GENERAL

- (i) The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is responsible for the care and maintenance of the Churchyard under the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956.
- (ii) Works (including the introduction, renewal or alteration of any item) may only be carried out in accordance with these current Regulations.
- (iii) The Churchyard Regulations are not capricious or arbitrary. They have been drafted with care and are designed to acknowledge, with humility and with due pastoral sensitivity, that churchyards are not just an important part of our heritage but are a setting for an appropriately Christian reflection on death and a reverend memorial to the dead. Memorials should not be a demonstration of the worldly or material wealth of the deceased, nor should they reflect the vagaries of fashion.
- (iv) The Chancellor is concerned that some stonemasons appear to be unaware of the Churchyard Regulations. Where a memorial does not comply with the Churchyard Regulations, it may be that there will be strong pastoral reasons for allowing it and that a faculty can be applied for setting out those reasons. It is then a matter for the Chancellor to decide having received the advice of the DAC, the incumbent and the PCC. It is not a matter for an incumbent to decide without reference to the Chancellor. In particular it has never been a matter for a stonemason to decide without reference to the incumbent and the Chancellor.
- (v) Please see the current Chancellor's Guidelines regarding Exhumation. (A copy is available from the Diocesan Registry.)

B LOCAL CHURCHYARD RULES

It is recommended that every PCC should formally adopt a set of Churchyard Rules to cover the use and maintenance of the churchyard. These Rules must conform to the Chancellor's Regulations but should also include more detailed requirements for day-to-day care. A model set of Churchyard Rules, which can be adopted or modified by the PCC to suit local circumstances, can be obtained from the Diocesan Registry or from the Secretary to the Diocesan Advisory Committee ("the DAC").

C RIGHTS OF BURIAL

Provided the churchyard has not been closed by Order in Council:

- (i) parishioners (including those on the church electoral roll) and others who die in the parish have a right of burial in the churchyard, if there is space remaining;
- (ii) the incumbent, PCC and churchwardens may also grant permission for the burial of other persons at their discretion;
- (iii) a grave space may be reserved by faculty, but not otherwise; and
- (iv) the whole churchyard is vested in the incumbent alone. No right of ownership is conferred upon the relatives of the deceased (or upon any other person) by any of the following:
 - (a) the reservation of a grave space;
 - (b) the exercise of the right of burial; or
 - (c) the erection of a memorial.

D EXISTING MEMORIALS

It is not uncommon for churchyards already to contain memorials introduced in the past (with or without faculty) which do not conform to the criteria set out in these Regulations. However, such memorials are not to be followed as precedents. If there is any doubt, the advice of the Registrar or the DAC should be sought.

E CREMATION PLOTS

The creation of a new area for the burial of cremated remains will require a faculty and the DAC's advice is set out a separate Guidance Note. The faculty will set out the governing regulations for the cremated remains area including its extent, any landscaping to be included, and the size and materials for individual memorials.

Existing areas for cremated remains must be maintained according to the local Churchyard Rules. Cremated remains should preferably be put into the ground without a box although biodegradable containers are acceptable. They can be interred in existing family graves.

F CULTIVATION

The surface of the churchyard should be kept as level as possible, free from mounds or kerbs, so that the grass may be cut. Bulbs may be allowed. Further details may be listed in the local Churchyard Rules.

G RIGHTS OF WAY

Rights of Way or Wayleaves (whether private or public) including telephone or electricity poles or pipelines over or through consecrated ground require a faculty. Without a faculty they are invalid.

In the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Bristol

Additional Matters Order 23 September 2026

Churchyard Memorial Regulations

1. This Additional Matters Order is made on 23 September 2026, pursuant to the power contained in section 78 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018 (as amended).
2. The advice of the Diocesan Advisory Committee has been sought prior to the making of this Order as required under section 78(4) of the Measure.
3. The matters specified in Schedule 1 to this Order may be undertaken without a faculty provided the procedure specified in Schedule 2 to this Order is followed.
4. Should any question arise as to whether a particular proposal constitutes a matter specified in Schedule 1, it is to be referred to the Chancellor by the minister for determination.
5. Application may be made to the Chancellor by the minister in relation to a particular proposed memorial for directions as to matters which are not specified in Schedule 1, but which are of a similar or comparable nature. The Chancellor may direct that such matters be treated as if they were so specified.
6. This Order applies to the whole of the Diocese, save for any churchyard or burial ground expressly excluded by direction of the Chancellor. It does not extend to the consecrated parts of municipal cemeteries operated by local authorities.
7. Particular Churchyard Regulations previously authorised by faculty in respect of individual churchyards or burial grounds will continue in force where applicable until such time as the Chancellor directs otherwise.
8. For the purposes of this order, the term ‘minister’ shall be taken to mean the incumbent of the benefice in which the burial ground is situated. If there is no incumbent, or the benefice is for whatever reason vacant, then the person acting as priest in charge of the parish or the curate licensed to the charge of the parish shall be treated as the minister. If there is no priest or curate of that description (or if any of the aforesaid persons is unable or unwilling to act), the area dean of the deanery in which the parish is situated shall be deemed to be the minister. In case of doubt, the matter may be referred to the chancellor whose direction as to who shall be treated as minister for the purposes of this Order shall be conclusive.¹
9. **This order shall come into force on 01 November 2026.**
10. A copy of this Order is to be filed in the diocesan registry in accordance with section 78(5) of the Measure.

The Worshipful Justin Gau
Chancellor of the Diocese of Bristol

23 September 2026

¹ This may include the designation of a Team Vicar as ‘minister’ in respect of a particular burial ground.

Schedule 1

Matters Not Requiring a Faculty

Part 1. General Provisions

- 1.1 The matters which may be undertaken without a faculty are:
- (a) the introduction of a new memorial that complies with the specifications in Part 2 of this Schedule; and
 - (b) the repair or alteration of an existing memorial as described in Part 3,
- provided that they have been approved in accordance with the procedure set out in Schedule 2.
- 1.2 In this Schedule,
- “base” means the component supporting a memorial on its foundation;
- “cremated remains tablet” means a rectangular stone or slate tablet placed above the cremated remains of the person commemorated, the upper face of which is flush with the surrounding ground;
- “foundation” means the element that connects a memorial to the ground and transfers the load from the memorial to the ground; the top surface of the foundation being flush with the surrounding ground or below ground level;
- “grave” means a place of burial below ground level;
- “headstone” means a “lawn memorial” or a “monolith memorial” erected at the head of a grave;
- “incised” in relation to lettering, motifs, emblems or other images, includes being cut either by hand or by machine;
- “inscription plate” means a stone forming part of a memorial, into which is incised lettering relating to the person whose body is buried there or whose death is being commemorated;
- “lawn memorial” means an independent vertical inscription plate attached to a horizontal base which is fixed to a foundation;
- “memorial” means a freestanding object installed in a churchyard in memory of the deceased;
- “monolith memorial” means an independent vertical inscription plate set in a concrete foundation which is set directly into the ground;
- “relief” in relation to lettering, motifs, emblems or other images, refers to such being carved either by hand or by machine
- “the British Standard” means British Standard BS 8415:2018 *Memorials within burial grounds and memorial sites – Specification*², or any similar standard that may replace BS 8415:2018;
- “wooden cross memorial” means a memorial in the form of a wooden cross erected at the head of a grave, into which is incised the name of the person commemorated and the date on which that person died.

² Copies of this may be inspected at major public libraries, or from some memorial masons.

Part 2. The Introduction of a New Memorial

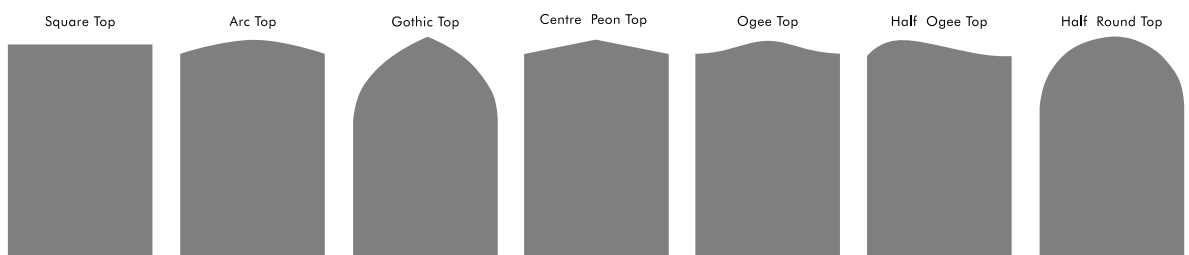
Basic principle

- 1.3 Any new memorial is erected so as to comply with the details specified in the British Standard, so far as relevant.

The form of a new memorial

- 1.4 The memorial is:
- (a) in the form of a headstone;
 - (b) in the form of a wooden cross memorial;
 - (c) in the form of a lawn memorial erected by or on behalf of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission;
 - (d) a cremated remains tablet;
 - (e) in the form of a horizontal slab sunk so that the surface of the same is sufficiently flush with the surrounding earth to allow a mower or autoscythe to pass over it.
- 1.5 In the case of a headstone, the shape of the inscription plate is one of those in Diagram 1, or one similar to one of the shapes in that diagram.

Diagram 1



and may contain one or two metal flower containers forming part of the base of the memorial.

- 1.6 In the case of a wooden cross memorial, adequate provision is made to prevent premature degradation below ground level.
- 1.7 Paragraph 1.4(d) does not apply where cremated remains are interred in a grave that is already marked by a headstone or a wooden cross memorial.
- 1.8 The memorial does not include attached plaques, or kerbs, railings, chippings, statues, or other objects.
- 1.9 The memorial is located so that no part of it is closer than 1500mm to the wall of the church.

The dimensions of the memorial

- 1.10 In the case of a headstone:
- (a) the height of the memorial is between 450mm and 1220mm;
 - (b) the width of the inscription plate is between 375mm and 915mm;
 - (c) the thickness of the inscription plate fixed to a base is between 75mm and 105mm;
 - (d) the thickness of a slate monolith is between 38mm and 105mm;

- (e) the base, if any, is not larger than 915mm in width, 460mm in depth (front to back), and 155mm thick; and
- (f) is placed conveniently for the churchyard mower to pass around.

1.11 In the case of a wooden cross memorial:

- (a) the height of the cross is between 750mm and 1220mm;
- (b) the width of the cross is between 500mm and 815mm;
- (c) the thickness of the timber is between 40mm and 55mm; and
- (d) the section of the memorial below the ground is at least one third of the height of the section above the ground.

1.12 In the case of a cremated remains tablet:

- (a) the size and shape are similar to those of others in the immediate vicinity;
- (b) in any case the dimensions are not more than 450mm by 400mm; and
- (c) it should be sunk low enough to allow a mower or autoscythe to pass over them.

1.13 The height of a memorial is to be measured from ground level; and in the case of sloping ground or ground that has been re-contoured to accommodate the burial, "ground level" is the level of the ground immediately adjacent to the centre point of the rear of the base once the interment has been completed.

The materials and colour of the memorial

1.14 In the case of a headstone or a cremated remains tablet, it is made of slate or one of the following types of natural stone:

- (a) sandstone;
- (b) limestone; or
- (c) granite.

1.15 The colour of the slate or stone is not such as to render the memorial discordant in the context of the church and churchyard.

1.16 In the case of a headstone, the principal surface of the inscription plate is not polished or reflective.

1.17 In the case of a cremated remains tablet, the surface is not polished or reflective.

The inscription on the memorial

1.18 Any inscription is:

- (a) factually accurate;
- (b) not considered by the minister to be likely to be offensive or controversial for any reason; and
- (c) not inconsistent with Christian doctrine.

- 1.19 The inscription includes:
- (a) the name of the person being commemorated (which may be or may include the name by which that person was generally known); and
 - (b) the date or year in which that person died; and
 - (c) either the date or year in which that person was born, or the age of that person at death.
- 1.20 Where any text in the inscription is in a language other than English, a translation has been supplied to the minister for retention in the parish records
- 1.21 Any lettering is
- (a) uncoloured; or
 - (b) coloured in one or two colours, which does not render the memorial discordant in the context of the church and churchyard.
- 1.22 Any lettering on:
- (a) the inscription plate of a headstone;
 - (b) a wooden cross; or
 - (c) a cremated remains tablet
- is either incised into the memorial or in relief and not more than 100mm in height.
- 1.23 In the case of a headstone or a cremated remains tablet, any motif, emblem or other image forming part of the design of the memorial:
- (a) is of a character commonly found in churchyard memorials, or is relevant to the life of the person commemorated;
 - (b) is a fitting complement to the wording forming the rest of the design;
 - (c) does not exceed 33% of the face of the headstone; or, if there is more than one such, no more than 33% in total';
 - (d) is either incised into or in relief of the stone;
 - (e) is uncoloured, or coloured in such a manner that the memorial is not discordant in the context of the church and churchyard in a single colour;
 - (f) is not inconsistent with Christian doctrine; and
 - (g) may include a badge or insignia of the Armed Forces of the Crown provided that the incumbent has a letter of authority from the relevant branch of the Forces.
- 1.24 In the case of a headstone, there is no trademark or advertisement except for a reference to the mason (in lettering not higher than 15mm on the side or the reverse of the memorial).
- 1.25 The memorial does not contain a QR code, or any other device intended to enable direct communication with an electronic resource.

Part 3. The Repair or Alteration of an Existing Memorial

- 1.26 Any existing memorial being repaired or altered has been lawfully introduced into the churchyard or has been in place for at least six years.
- 1.27 If a memorial is removed and re-erected in the course of being repaired or altered, it is re-erected so as to comply with the details specified in the British Standard.
- 1.28 Any alteration of or addition to the inscription on a memorial is in the same style and finish as the original inscription; and the inscription on the memorial as altered complies with the paragraphs 1.19 to 1.26 above.
- 1.29 On the application of any person with a sufficient interest in a memorial may be permanently removed if replaced by a new memorial complying with these current Regulations.
- 1.30 By signing the application form an applicant is to understand that:
- (a) the memorial may be removed if in the judgement of the PCC it has ceased to be in good repair or has become dangerous; or after 100 years have elapsed since the death of the person it commemorates;
 - (b) the upkeep of a memorial and the resulting costs will be the responsibility of the heirs of the person whom it commemorates; and
 - (c) permission is for the erection of a memorial only and not the purchase of a plot of land.

Schedule 2

Approval Procedure

The procedure to be followed prior to the undertaking of any matter contained in Schedule 1 is as follows.

- (d) An application in the form annexed to this Schedule³ is to be sent to the minister (as defined in paragraph 8 of the order);
- (e) Such form is to be duly signed by the applicant(s) and memorial mason;
- (f) If the minister or other authorised person gives permission, this is to be endorsed in writing in the relevant section of the form, whereupon the matter may proceed;
- (g) If an applicant petitions for a faculty to admit the said memorial, then for that purpose, under rule 20.6 of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015 (as amended), it is directed that the form annexed to Schedule 2 may be treated as the petition.

Important Warning

Any memorial erected otherwise than in accordance with this procedure, or with the authority of a faculty granted by the Chancellor, may lead to enforcement proceedings in which the Consistory Court may order removal of the memorial at the expense of the person or persons responsible, who may also be required to pay the court costs of such proceedings.

It is within the Chancellor's powers to ban certain stonemasons from being allowed to erect gravestones in churchyards, and the Chancellor will have no hesitation in exercising those powers if he is satisfied that there has been a deliberate decision to erect a gravestone without applying for a faculty.

Faculty applications

Before the Chancellor will consider any application to install a memorial outside the Churchyard Regulations he must be provided, in addition to a fully completed application form, with the following.

- i) A short explanation as to why the applicant seeks to install a memorial which falls outside of the Regulations. This need not be anything other than a short letter or statement setting out why a variation in material or shape or wording is required. The Chancellor does not require a document that is drafted by solicitors. The statement should explain the pastoral or other reason why the applicant wishes to depart from the Regulations.
- ii) The Chancellor will need to see that the applicant has raised the matter with the PCC of the churchyard and need to see a copy of the PCC's opinion. It should be emphasised that the PCC's opinion is not determinative one way or the other, but it will assist the Chancellor in judging what local opinion is on the application.
- iii) In relation to wording that is controversial the Chancellor will need an explanation as to why the words have been chosen.

³ An electronic version of the form may be downloaded from the Consistory Court page of the Diocesan website. Copies may also be obtained from the Diocesan Registry.