

LEICESTER DIOCESE

A CHURCHYARD PROBLEM

A problem has arisen which is this. The size and shape of churchyard memorials which may be permitted by an incumbent is laid down in the Diocesan Churchyard Regulations. Exceptions are only allowed on petition for a faculty from the Chancellor, or in the rare case where the parish has chosen to have its own churchyard regulations.

Unfortunately the rules are often flouted and memorials (usually rather flashy) have been permitted by an incumbent where they ought not to have been. This is partly the fault of the monumental mason, but more the fault of the incumbent. It is not usually the fault of the bereaved family, although they have paid for the memorial. Once the offending stone is in place, it is difficult (for obvious reasons) for the Archdeacon to require it to be altered or removed.

The monumental masons complain that their task is made more difficult because memorials which are refused in one parish are allowed in another, and this leads to confusion and ill-feeling.

The remedy is simple: the Regulations should be enforced. If any particular parish regards the Diocesan Regulations as too strict or in some other way unsuitable for the churchyard in question, for instance if the churchyard is already half full with memorials of the prohibited type and the parish likes them, then the parish can ask for parish regulations of its own to cater for this. But what cannot be right is that the existing regulations are simply ignored.

The point has been reached at which it is reasonable that an order of the Consistory Court may be made ordering an unsuitable memorial to be removed and replaced at the expense of the incumbent and the monumental mason responsible.

It is the duty of the incumbents and the monumental masons to know the Regulations (which are on the Diocesan website) and to obey them.

Mark Blackett-Ord
Chancellor and Vicar General of the Diocese
Judge of the Consistory Court
3 May 2018

2018

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