

Parish of Wargrave with Knowl Hill Churchyard Regulations (2015)

Reference: Diocese of Oxford Revised Graveyard Regulations

Introduction

These regulations have been revised in the light of the directive dated 15th July 2005 from the Chancellor of the Diocese of Oxford and the Registrar's update of 2nd October 2012. They incorporate the Chancellor's regulations, which apply to all churchyards in the Diocese, together with the Chancellor's authority. Regulations of earlier date are obsolete. Detailed guidance on the form of memorials and design constraints is set out in the annex.

The purpose of these regulations is to maintain the dignity and peace of the churchyard and to simplify maintenance. They apply equally to the Wargrave and the Knowl Hill churchyards and cemeteries. Areas within those locations are designated for the interment of cremated remains and related memorials.

Legal Right and Delegated Authority

All parishioners (not just those closely associated with the church) have a right to be buried in the churchyard/cemetery of their parish church. The allotment of a burial site is registered through a special form available from the Parish Office.

The placing of a headstone or memorial tablet over a grave or interred remains, though now customary, remains a privilege, and strictly speaking nothing may be introduced into a churchyard or cemetery without the authority of the Chancellor of the Diocese in the form of a Faculty. Because each is a *churchyard* any memorial must be compatible with the Christian religion.

In practice, however, authority to approve a simple upright headstone or memorial tablet has been delegated to the Vicar. A more complex memorial requires the approval of the Chancellor, as does any headstone or memorial that the Vicar feels unable to approve. Specific information on regulations covering the erection of memorials, their dimensions and design features is attached.

Formal approval is required for the erection of a memorial. A separate form, to be signed by both the Vicar and the applicant, is also available from the Parish Office.

Churchyard Upkeep

Graves may not be kerbed, fenced or otherwise delineated as individual gardens because they may inhibit good maintenance or come to dominate adjoining graves. Similarly, shrubs are not permitted. Chippings are prohibited to prevent breakage of mowing machinery. Use of weed-killers is also banned unless authorised by the Vicar. The Vicar may permit planting of bulbs or annuals or consider applications for special planting but this will be in accordance with overall plans and long term landscaping of the churchyards or cemeteries.

Hanging baskets and other tree decorations are not permitted. Only cut flowers or wreaths may be left at the graveside. These must be removed when withered or decaying. No plastic or artificial items are permitted except:

- Remembrance Day wreaths or poppies, or Christmas wreaths; these must be removed after a period of one month.
- Silk flowers, appropriate to the season; these must be removed when they become faded or bedraggled.

Toys or similar ornaments may be left at the graveside for a period of twelve months after the burial or interment after which the family should remove them.

General maintenance of the Wargrave and Knowl Hill churchyards is superintended by the PCC. The PCC is not to be held responsible for any damage caused to any stone not lying flush with the ground, when mowing takes place nor is it responsible for maintaining monuments. The burial rights owner should keep them in a good state of repair. If a monument becomes dangerous the Vicar will authorise a contractor to make it safe, give notice to the burial rights owner and seek to recover the costs from them.

Grave mounds should be left untouched for at least six months to allow time for the ground to settle. Thereafter the PCC may level a grave mound for ease of maintenance, although within a year of the burial, notice will be given to the deceased's family of this intention.

Principles and Precedent

Decisions on the location of burial sites and the form of memorials lie in the first instance with the Vicar except where a faculty is required. Those decisions will be based on the general principles set out in these regulations and in consultation with the Churchwardens with contentious issues to be discussed by the PCC.

The fact that in a few instances our churchyards contain memorials not precisely compliant with the present regulations does not constitute a precedent for similar memorials to be erected in contravention of these regulations. The granting of any of the aforementioned rights carries with it the commitment to observe these regulations, which have been set out to achieve the best situation for all with an interest in our church burial grounds.

These updated regulations were adopted by the PCC on 20 July 2015.

The Parish Office, St Mary's Church, Wargrave

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Annex to Churchyard Regulations

General Guidance on Memorials

Regulations of immediate relevance to those arranging for an interment are set out below. More detailed information dealing with these matters is held by the Vicar, or may be viewed on the Diocesan website <http://www.oxford.anglican.org>. Funeral Directors will furnish explanations on practical aspects.

Erection of Memorials

No permission will be given for the erection of a memorial until six months has elapsed from the date of the burial or interment. This is because of the problem of settlement of the excavated ground.

Any memorial must be made of natural stone with a non-reflecting surface, or of hardwood. Stones traditionally used in local buildings, or stones closely similar to them in colour and texture, are to be preferred. Black, blue or red igneous rock (e.g. red granite), marble, synthetic stone or plastic are not permitted.

Painted or polished stone is also not permitted, although a small area of non-reflective polishing may be permitted, to take an inscription.

Dimensions

A memorial may consist of a headstone or a tablet flush with the ground. A headstone may be no larger than 1200mm (4ft) in height from the ground, 900mm (3ft) in width and 150mm (6ins) in thickness, and no smaller than 75mm (3ins) in thickness, save that slate memorials may be no smaller than 38mm (1.5ins) in thickness.

A memorial tablet will normally comprise a flat stone laid into grass and measuring no more than 600mm x 450mm (24"x18").

Designs

Headstone tops may be curved or straight edged. Individually designed memorials are encouraged but may require permission by faculty. Any memorials in the shape of a heart or cross are not permitted save by way of faculty.

Photographic and etched images, mouldings, etchings, videos or sound recordings of the deceased, Quick Response Codes, imagery (of stained glass windows, flowers, animals, toys and the like), kerbs, fencing, railings, chains, chippings or glass chunks or beads are prohibited save when permitted by faculty, which is unlikely to be granted save in exceptional circumstances.

Armorial bearings, crests, figurative sculpture, or other statuary may only be authorised by faculty.

Inscriptions

Inscriptions must be simple, reverent, and theologically acceptable; they may include appropriate quotations from the Scriptures or literary sources. A request for any other inscription (including non-literary verses)

must be made to the Diocesan Chancellor via the Registry.

Inscriptions must be incised or in relief. Plastic, lead or other inserted lettering is not permitted. Nicknames or pet names may be used in addition to baptismal names; they should, however, normally be included in inverted commas within the name of the deceased. Diminutives and pet names may be permitted within the discretion of the Vicar. Hand-crafted letter-cutting is welcomed and encouraged (see examples given in *The Churchyards Handbook* and in *Memorials by Artists*).

Additions may be made to an inscription at a later date following a further interment in the same grave or for other similar reason. Any such addition must, however, be separately authorised. The lettering, layout and wording must be consistent with the original inscription.

Trademarks

No advertisement or trademark may be inscribed on a memorial, although the mason's name may be inscribed at the side or the reverse in unleaded letters, no larger than 13mm (0.5ins).

Interment of Cremated Remains

Cremated remains may be buried or strewed in the designated areas within the churchyards and cemeteries reserved for this purpose. The remains should be strewed on earth (for example, on a flower bed) and lightly covered with earth.

Memorial tablets set flush with the ground are permitted adjacent to the site of the remains in these areas. Memorial wall plaques are no longer permitted. The material used in each case and the strictures on design, sculpture and inscriptions should conform to those applied to other memorials.