

St Mary Magdalene, Longfield

Church Downs Extension-Churchyard Regulations

We hope the following notes, based on the Churchyard Regulations established by the Chancellor of the Diocese of Rochester, will be helpful in our common responsibility to maintain and care for our churchyard.

HEADSTONES

Inscriptions

Epitaphs serve five main purposes

- i) To bear witness to the Christian hope of the resurrection
- ii) To identify the resting place of the mortal remains of the dead
- iii) To honour the dead
- iv) To comfort the living
- v) To inform future generations

Epitaphs are expressions of love and hope. They are necessarily short and so each word must be chosen with care and sincerity. The terms of any epitaph should be approved in consultation with the Rector, who is also subject to the Diocesan regulations.

As a minimum, the Christian name and surname of the deceased should be given, with age and date (or year) of birth and death.

Lettering, preferably incised, should not be gilded or silvered.

Materials

Gravestones are to be in weathering natural stone or slate, or hard wood. The aim is for them to blend in with the setting of the church, churchyard and locality. Stones should not be mirror polished, nor polished beyond a good smooth finish. No monument shall be of red, black or dark grey granite, marble, synthetic stone or plastic.

Design

- i) Headstones should not be more than 1200mm (4ft) high, 900mm (3ft) wide and 150mm (6ins) thick; nor less than 750mm (2ft 6ins) high, 500mm (1ft 8ins) wide and 75mm (3ins) thick.
- ii) A base forming an integral part of the design is permitted. This may incorporate a vase for flowers arranged so the top of it is level or below the surface of the base. A base shall not project more than 50mm (2ins) beyond the headstone in any direction, except where a vase is incorporated when the base may extend a maximum of 200mm (8ins) in front of the headstone. The base itself shall be securely fixed on a foundation slab which shall be fixed flush with, or just below, the surface of the turf. The foundation slab shall extend beyond the base by between 75mm to 125mm (3ins and 5ins) all around.
- iii) No monument shall include any kerbs, railings, plain or coloured chippings, figured statuary, pictorial etchings or photographic representations, or to be in the form of an open book or heart.
- iv) Every application for the introduction of a monument into the churchyard must first be made in writing, in duplicate, to the Rector using the form CR1. This is obtainable from the Diocesan Office (*St Nicholas Church, Boley Hill, Rochester ME1 1SL – 01634 830333*) or from your Funeral Director or stonemason.

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE CHURCHYARD

- i) The Parochial Church Council may, at their discretion, level any mound twelve months after the latest interment in the grave.
- ii) If suitable, bulbs and flowers appropriate to the surrounding downland meadow, may be planted in the soil of the grave. Wildflower seeds would be recommended. Fresh cut flowers should be placed in a vase or sunken container. Graves with flowers need to be kept tidy with the removal of dead flowers.
- iii) No artificial flowers or figured statuary may be placed on the grave. These will be removed to maintain the ambience of a country churchyard.

GENERAL

It is our aim to preserve and maintain Church Downs churchyard as a place of natural beauty, bearing dignity and witness to the Christian faith.
A copy of the Churchyard regulations is available from the Rector.