

## What do I need to think about?

The minimum time between the burial and putting up a memorial is six months as the ground needs time to settle. Before you get too far with your plans, please talk to your vicar (parish priest) to avoid difficulties and disappointment later in the process.

You will need to decide whether you want to commission an individual memorial, perhaps created by an artist, or choose a more standard design from a catalogue. Once you have a clearer idea, you'll need to fill in a form which your stonemason will give you. This will then be forwarded to the vicar.

The vicar is allowed to authorise simple headstones, provided that they comply with the Churchyard Regulations.

In less straightforward cases, you will need to apply to the Chancellor of the Diocese for permission (a 'Faculty'), for which there is a fee. Your vicar will be able to advise you about how to apply.

The Churchyard Regulations are available in full on our website: <http://stmaryscoxhoe.co.uk/churchyard>

In summary, the **key points** are:

- **Materials:** Natural stone, with a non reflecting surface, or hardwood only. Stones traditionally used in local buildings are preferred.
- **Size:** Headstones should be no higher than 1220mm (4ft); no wider than 915mm (3ft); no thicker than 155mm (6 inches); no smaller than 75mm (3 inches) in thickness, except for slate which may be 40mm (1½ inches). Ledgers should be no larger than 460mm (18 inches) by 460mm.
- **Designs:** No portraits or photographs on the headstone; no kerbs, fencing, railings, chains or chippings; no heart shaped stones. No sculptures or statues. No lights.
- **Inscriptions:** Inscriptions must be simple, reverent and theologically acceptable; they may include appropriate quotations from the scriptures or literary sources.
- **Upkeep:** Graves may not be fenced; no individual gardens. No shrubs planted. Only cut flowers, wreaths or silk flowers. No plastic flowers. Up to three toys or similar ornaments may be left for a period of 12 months only, and then removed.

## When someone you love has died

When someone you love has died, it is a time of sadness and pain. The Church is here to help you through your bereavement. Please be assured of our thoughts and prayers.

There is a lot to think about as you adjust to your loss and it can be a bewildering time. This leaflet is intended to help answer some of the questions you might have about commemorating the person who has died



Set your troubled hearts at rest.  
Trust in God always; trust also in me.  
There are many dwelling-places in my  
Father's house. John 14: 1-2



St Mary's Church  
Coxhoe

## Can my family member be buried in the churchyard?

If the church has a churchyard that is still open for burials, a person who has been living or has died in the parish has the right to be buried there or to have their ashes interred. 'Living in the parish' includes someone who normally lived there but who died elsewhere, such as in hospital.

Sometimes people believe that they have bought the plot of land in which their loved one is buried. This is not the case: they are simply paying for the work involved in the burial and making a contribution towards maintaining the churchyard. No part of a consecrated churchyard can be sold.

## I want to put up a headstone. What do I need to know?

Most people like to have a headstone or monument to commemorate the person who has died. You'll want to think carefully about this, because once in place, a stone will be there for a very long time. You may not realise that no one has the right to a churchyard memorial. All memorials have to be approved first.

If the person who died has been cremated you may want a ledger stone as a memorial.

A legal officer known as the Chancellor is responsible for making the Churchyard Regulations for the Diocese of Durham. The Regulations cover questions such as size, materials, designs and inscriptions.



## Why these regulations?

Churchyard regulations are there to help make sure that the churchyard is a place of peace and beauty for everyone to enjoy.

A memorial that might be suitable for an urban, civic cemetery may look out of place next to a historic church building. The Chancellor has a responsibility to make sure that the churchyard remains an appropriate setting for a parish church for the next several hundred years. And because it is a churchyard, any memorial must be compatible with the Christian faith.

We hope that you understand the need for regulations. They are designed to make sure that our churchyards remain harmonious places of peace. By providing these guidelines we hope you will be able to choose an appropriate memorial worthy of the memory of the person who has died, without the trouble and expense of seeking formal permission from the Chancellor.



Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever has faith in me shall live, even though he dies. John 11:2