

BENCHES IN CHURCHYARDS



Introducing a bench in a churchyard - what you need to know.

A bench with a commemorative plaque is a popular way of commemorating a loved one interred in a churchyard. Permission to introduce a bench can be obtained under List B, meaning that it can be authorised by the Archdeacon. To do this, please submit an application through the on-line faculty system. The following guidance explains what you'll need to consider and what we'll need to know in order to process it.

Location

- A sketch plan (ideally) or photograph of the churchyard showing the proposed location. You can take a screenshot of an online map and annotate it using a programme like MS Paint to insert an arrow. We don't need to know the location to the nearest centimetre, but we do need to be able to place it in the context of the site as a whole.
- The bench should not be within 2 metres of any new graves.
- The bench shouldn't be placed hard up against any boundary wall, as otherwise it may encourage unauthorised access.

- A sketch plan (ideally) or photograph of the
- The bench also shouldn't be placed hard up against any wall of the church, as otherwise it might impede access for builders carrying out maintenance or repairs.
- We'll need to know about access to the bench. Will it be possible to reach it by a surfaced path? If not, it may become inaccessible in bad weather.

The bench

We'll need details of the item you propose to install – dimensions, design and material. A photograph or drawing should be sufficient, or else you may be able to download a data sheet from the supplier's website.

Timber benches are preferred to plastic benches. The latter are vulnerable to damage from burns and cannot easily be repaired if broken. Nor can inscriptions be carved on them or easily attached to them. Even though they are often manufactured from recycled plastic, this does not mean that they can necessarily be recycled again at the end of their useful life. It is still unclear how they perform in the long term and whether they are resistant to weathering.

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Ensure that the timber has been sustainably sourced by, for example, choosing a bench made from wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council UK. Aim to minimise the overall environmental impact by giving preference to products manufactured using reclaimed, reused and locally sourced materials. Avoid timber produced from the logging of natural hardwood forests, as this contributes to deforestation and the distance from which it is imported means it has a high carbon footprint.

The bench should be fixed to the ground for safety and security. In the past, benches were mounted on concrete plinths, but these can sometimes outlast the bench itself and are difficult to remove when that happens. We prefer the bench to be positioned on stone or concrete pads, or else to be held in place with metal pegs or brackets. Please include details of the preferred method.

You'll find below a couple of images of benches recently introduced at churchyards in the Diocese. It's important to note that these don't represent the only admissible models. Nor does it mean that if you choose one for your own application then it'll automatically be granted. But they will give you an idea of the sort of thing that is acceptable.

The plaque

- We'll need details of the commemorative inscription, including the exact wording. The type of lettering and material/finish of the plaque must be included in your application.
- Any inscription must conform to the guidelines in Section 6 of the Churchyard Regulations, viz.

Inscriptions must not be profane or offensive. The parish priest has discretion to allow familiar or idiomatic expressions or to refer the inscription to the chancellor. All lettering must be incised. Uncoloured lettering is preferred, although black, silver or gold may be allowed, but not leaded. Further inscriptions may be added with the written consent of the parish priest, usually where there is a second interment in the same grave, and in such cases, existing lettering may be renovated to match the new, but not otherwise. No advertisement or trademark shall be inscribed.

Don't forget to include a PCC resolution in support of the proposal as this is a mandatory requirement.