THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND SUFFOLK

MEMORIALS AND PLAQUES



Sometimes family members, friends or other close contacts of the deceased member of a parish wish to commemorate him or her with a memorial inside the church. This is usually a wall plaque, although it can take other forms, such as stained glass windows.

If such a request is made to you, then you need to be aware that a special procedure applies for granting permission. This isn't a matter that can be authorised by the parish, as is the case with monuments in churchyards. It is a two-stage process and this is how it works

1 Stage one

The first stage is to gain the preliminary view of the Chancellor (the Judge of the Diocese, who ultimately makes the decision) on exceptionality. That is to say - what is it about the individual concerned that justifies commemorating him or her with something other than the usual kind of churchyard memorial? For this, you should provide a Statement of Exceptionality, giving some biographical information and setting out in detail why you believe this person's contribution to parish life was indeed exceptional. The individual concerned needs to have played an active role in it.

However famous he or she might have been in public life, that may not be enough if the connection with the church was occasional.

It's worth taking time over the Statement, and that includes getting the views of other members of the parish, which can help to make the case. It doesn't have to be long – a couple of sides at the most should suffice – but it does have to be cogent.

2 Stage two

If the Chancellor is satisfied that the test has been met, you should then apply to the DAC as you would for any other matter, providing full details of the memorial – its proposed location in the building, design, materials, dimensions, the wording of the inscription and so on.

The Committee will then decide whether to recommend the proposal judged on its impact on the building and aesthetic merits. If it does, the usual procedure for obtaining a faculty then applies, including the mandatory 28-day notice period and a formal petition for faculty to the Registry.

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Depending on the visual impact, external consultations with Historic England and the national amenity societies may also be necessary.

Timing

We appreciate that, in the case of a recent bereavement, the desire to proceed with commemoration as quickly as possible can often be very strong. That's natural, but it's important to explain to applicants at the outset how the process outlined above works and the timespan involved.

It's not a formality, and it is not a foregone conclusion that permission will be granted, or that a memorial will be recommended for faculty in the form in which it is first submitted – sometimes the DAC will request changes.

We always try our best to be fair and cooperative, but we still have to follow due procedure.