Guide to Choosing a Memorial Inscription

Arthur C. Towner Ltd
Monumental Masons
Introduction

Finding the right words can be the most difficult part of choosing a memorial. This guide is intended as a starting point, but our masons are always on hand with expert advice to help you.

It is worth taking time over your choices. If possible, visit the cemetery or churchyard and look at some existing inscriptions: it might help to clarify your likes and dislikes.

Although it is helpful to have a good initial idea of the wording you would like, we will invite you to check the inscription laid out on the stone before cutting, so you can change your mind about the wording or the layout if you wish.

Church of England regulations are strict on the type of wording allowed. The minister should advise you from the outset, but we are also on hand to help. Please see page 7 for more information.

Contact us to discuss your ideas with one of our craftsmen at:

Arthur C Towner Ltd
Monumental Masons
5a - 9 South Street
St Leonards-on-Sea
East Sussex TN37 6AP
Telephone: 01424 713124
Email: rogerwilcock@towners.co.uk
Layout of a Typical Inscription

These are the elements which commonly make up an inscription. You will find examples of each on the following pages.

Name
The most important part of the inscription, with the largest letters. Usually best near the top.

Dates
Many formats are possible, depending on the size of the stone and personal taste.

Description
How you would like your loved one to be remembered.

Epitaph
This may be some lines of poetry or scripture, or your own words to express your feelings.

Caption
A short introduction to the name.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

JOHN SMITH

1935 - 2000

A DEDICATED MUSICIAN AND TEACHER

SADLY MISSED

You do not have to follow this format. You can leave elements out or swap them around, or you can design your own layout. We can help by making drawings of alternatives to make it easier to decide. Please see page 7 for information on churchyard regulations about wording.

Caption
We will usually lay out the caption to complement the shape of the stone. If a design such as a cross is required, this may be incorporated with the caption. Here are some examples.

Caption

TREASURED MEMORIES

of

Cherished Memories

The light shines on in the darkness

IN EVER LOVING MEMORY

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

1935 - 2000

19th AUGUST 1935 - 2nd DECEMBER 2000

WHO DIED 2nd DECEMBER 2000

AGED 65

19 AUG. 1935 - 2 DEC. 2000

WHO FELL ASLEEP 2nd DECEMBER 2000

AGED 65

Name and Dates

Your loved one’s name is the most important part of the inscription. We will help you decide how to lay the name out to suit your chosen stone design. There are various formats for dates. Here are some examples.
Description

You might think of this as an opportunity to describe your loved one as if to a stranger, celebrating their character or achievements.

Please see page 7 for information on churchyard regulations.

Epitaph

Short or long, depending on taste and the available space on the stone, this is a chance to record your feelings about your loved one.

Here are some examples, but we can also help you find your own words.

**HE LIVED LIFE TO THE FULL**

A GENEROUS FAMILY MAN
LOVED BY ALL WHO KNEW HIM

She lived for her children

A DEVOTED AND INSPIRING TEACHER
FOR FORTY YEARS

SKILLED WITH HER HANDS
GENEROUS WITH HER HEART

Entrepreneur and Bon Viveur

A GENTLE MAN
AND A GENTLEMAN

RECTOR OF THIS PARISH
WHO FOUND JOY IN HIS FAITH

**REST IN PEACE**

GOD HAS YOU IN HIS KEEPING
WE HAVE YOU IN OUR HEARTS

PEACE, PERFECT PEACE

AT EVENING TIME IT SHALL BE LIGHT
Zech. xiv.7

But O for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still

LOVE NEVER DIES

He leadeth me by the still waters
Psalm XXIII

MEMORY IS A GOLDEN CHAIN
THAT BINDS US TILL WE MEET AGAIN

A loved one sleeping
Further Inspiration

Here is a further selection of some of our favourite sacred and secular lines.

True love is an ever-burning coal,
Burning brighter as the shadows fall.
_John Masefield_

How many loved your moments of glad grace.
_ W. B. Yeats_

So shall I join the choir invisible,
Whose music is the gladness of the world.
_George Eliot_

We are such stuff,
As dreams are made on, and our little life,
Is rounded with sleep.
_Shakespeare_

Let us sleep now.
_Wilfred Owen_

And yet is love not less, but more.
_Tennyson_

In the deserts of the heart,
Let the healing fountain start.
_W. H. Auden_

The deep and lovely quiet,
Of a strong heart at peace.
_D. H. Lawrence_

What will survive of us is love.
_Larkin_

Nothing can surpass the mystery of stillness.
_E. E. Cummings_

The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want.
_Psalm 23_

Many waters cannot quench love.
_Song of Songs 8:7_

Come unto me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.
_Matthew 11:28_

For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.
_Philippians 1:21_

I know that my redeemer lives.
_Job 19:25-27_

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.
_John 3:16_

I am the resurrection and the life says the Lord.
_John 11:25_

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
_Colossians 3:3_

To God we belong,
And to Him we shall return.
_Quran_

Churchyard Regulations

Chichester Diocese regulates all Church of England churchyards in the Hastings area. The regulations encourage inscriptions which say something about your loved one - their work, their interests, their place in the community, or perhaps their personality.

The rules do not allow the deceased to be addressed directly. For example, “You were our inspiration” would not be permitted, but “An inspiration to all who knew her” would be acceptable.

Proper names must be used, not nick-names or pet names. For example, “John” should be inscribed, if that was the given name, rather than “Jack”, even if that is how he was always known.

The regulations are not intended to produce bland uniformity. It is worth taking time to find personal and original wording that works within the rules, and we are happy to help with this.

Additional Inscriptions

Although it is never pleasant to think about, it is important to decide whether room should be left on the stone for a future name.

---

**JOHN PETER SMITH**
19th AUG 1935 - 2nd DEC 2000
ORGANIST AT ST MARY’S FOR 26 YEARS

FTED IN THE
MINISTRY OF
19th AUG 1935 - 2nd DEC 2000
ORGANIST AT ST MARY’S FOR 26 YEARS
AND HIS DEVOTED WIFE
JANE EMILY
1ST MAY 1935 - 12TH OCT 2002
A DEDICATED CARER AS A NURSE AND AS A WIFE AND MOTHER

---

**THE LORD’S MY SHEPHERD I SHALL NOT WANT**

---

**JOHN PETER SMITH**
19th AUG 1935 - 2nd DEC 2000
ORGANIST AT ST MARY’S FOR 26 YEARS

---

**THE LORD’S MY SHEPHERD I SHALL NOT WANT**
Letter Style

In our workshop, we offer letters cut by hand and by machine. Hand cut letters, which are drawn and cut by hand, give the most flexibility in style. Machine cut letters, where a computer cuts a stencil through which the letters are shot-blasted, are limited to the available fonts. We generally use this technique for granites, which are too hard and coarse to be ideal for hand-cutting.

Most people are familiar with computer fonts. However, these are designed for print, rather than cutting in stone, compromising legibility at a distance and resistance to weathering. Our masons will advise on suitable fonts for stone.

As every piece of stone and every inscription is different, we prefer to make decisions about letter style when preparing the stone for cutting. At this stage, we will invite you to come to the workshop to see the stone and discuss all aspects of the inscription.

Some examples.

- Smaller memorial suitable for an ashes area, with a simple inscription.
- Book memorial with room left for a second inscription.
- Inscription suitable for a churchyard.
- Inscription for a cemetery.

8 Guide to Choosing a Memorial Inscription