

Re All Saints, Crawley Down

Chichester Consistory Court: Hill Ch, August 2009

Headstone – churchyard regulations – inscription – Christian content

The petitioner sought a faculty for the erection of a headstone over the grave of her husband. The proposal fell outside the Churchyard Regulations in a number of respects, including its shape (a closed book), and the content of the inscription was not considered appropriate. The chancellor indicated that he would permit the shape of the headstone, noting the deceased's love of books and literature. He also could see nothing objectionable in the use of a nickname (provided that the same was used in addition to the deceased's full name) and the terms 'Dad and Grandad', observing that '[n]ot everyone is known by the name on his or her birth certificate. Provided that there is nothing trivial, inappropriate or disrespectful in the nickname. . . then it is right to include it'. The deceased was known by his family and the local community as 'Jacquer' and that is how he should be remembered in death.

However, the chancellor refused to grant the faculty in the form lodged on the basis that the proposed inscriptions 'Taken suddenly too soon' and 'Simply the best' were not appropriate in a Christian burial ground. In particular, the former inscription could be the cause of offence in relation to the Christian teaching on death and resurrection and the latter little more than the part of the lyrics of a popular song. [RA]

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Re St Augustine, Holly Hall, Dudley

Worcester Consistory Court: Mynors Ch, September 2009

War memorial – additional inscription

A memorial set up in memory of those who died in the First World War had been re-sited in the 1980s and now stood within the churchyard and therefore within the jurisdiction of the consistory court. The petitioners sought to add a bronze plaque matching the original First World War plaque to commemorate those of the parish who were killed in action in the Second World War. By the time the petition was heard the plaque had already been cast. It contained, in addition to the names, the date 3 September 2009 (being the seventieth anniversary of the start of the war) and the words 'Your life! Our freedom!' The Chancellor permitted the addition of the plaque with the removal of the final words. There was some debate about the date, 3 September 2009. The chancellor considered this to be a significant and suitable date, and it was immaterial that the date had passed prior to the addition of the plaque to the memorial. [WA]

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