

Neutral Citation Number: [2025] ECC Lin 5

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT AT LINCOLN

In the matter of St Peter and St Paul Churchyard, Reepham

And the Petition by Jonathan Samuel Hill for permission to introduce a polished black granite memorial with gold lettering.

Judgment

1. The Petitioner is the widower of his late wife Barbara Anne Hill to whom he was married for 52 years, who died on 25 November 2024. He applies for a Faculty for a memorial stone to be placed at his late wife's grave which conforms with the Churchyard Regulations save that he wishes the stone to be polished black granite with incised gold leaf lettering.
2. The Rector has delegated authority from me to grant permission for memorials that conform with the Churchyard Regulations, and therefore she has had to inform the Petitioner that she is unable to grant permission for it to be erected in the form he proposes. As a result, the Petitioner has applied to me for a Faculty.
3. The Petitioner seeks polished black granite and gold lettering because this is the same as the memorial stone for his father in a churchyard in Bristol: he has helpfully sent me a photo of this memorial. He tells me that even after 38 years it remains pristine and is easy to clean.
4. He also wishes this application to be treated as a joint application both for his late wife's memorial, as well as for his memorial for his adjacent grave when the time comes. There is only one application before me at present, but it will be helpful for the Petitioner to know what the approach of the court is to applications for polished black granite and gold lettering.
5. I have been provided with photographs of the existing churchyard and it is clear that polished black granite and gold lettering have not been used since the Regulations were introduced in 2008.
6. The Diocesan Advisory Committee have advised me on 4 September 2025 that they do not object to the proposal subject to the new headstone conforming with the Churchyard Regulations. So, Mr Hill's letter to me saying that the DAC had no objections to his application is not strictly correct as they required the application to

conform with the Churchyard Regulations. The use of polished black granite and gold leaf does not so conform.

7. I am sure that Mr Hill has read the introduction to the Churchyard Regulations in which it is explained that the churchyard must be seen as a whole melding in with its surroundings, and promoting a sense of peace and rest, rather than having adjacent individual memorials with jarring differences in style and form which would work against this. In my judgement polished black granite memorials with gold lettering even on one memorial stone in this churchyard would break up the sense of the churchyard being a cohesive whole: it would work against the sense that this was a place of peace and rest. For other churchyards (such as the one in Bristol Mr Hill refers to) where there are many such memorials, different considerations may apply, but here in this churchyard I am satisfied that what is proposed should not be permitted.
8. The fact that the PCC have voted against this proposal is significant: I take their objection into account.
9. I know this will be a disappointing decision for Mr Hill, but a memorial stone in honed grey granite with no gold lettering would be acceptable and in keeping with other memorials close by.
10. Mr Hill may want to consider whether the full stops between the dates are required. When the stone is cut, full stops between numbers often look unnecessary. I will leave this to Mr Hill to reflect upon, and it is not a requirement that no full stops are used if he wishes them to be there.
11. I waive my fee for this judgment.

The Revd HH Judge Mark Bishop
Chancellor
21/11/25