

## **Cemetery Transcription Guidelines and Tips - a Do and Do Not list**

Before starting a recording project, check to see if one has already been done.

First, inspect the integrity of the marker. If it is crumbling, don't touch it! Always keep in mind the most important rule of thumb: First Do No Harm! Ask yourself, "How long do I want this stone to survive?"

Never clean a grave in a way that may damage it. If you are unsure, it is best not to do anything. Always gain permission from those who manage the cemetery before attempting any cleaning. Do not use abrasive brushes or hand tools to remove vegetation or dirt from fragile monuments.

Tombstone rubbings are controversial for the risk they may place on the stones, and have been banned in some places. Do not use paint, flour, grass clippings, face powder, cornstarch, or shaving cream to highlight inscriptions.

Use a mirror to change the lighting angle.

"The best method is to use an artificial light source from the side under dark conditions to light the memorial that highlights even the faintest of inscriptions. If this technique does not reveal the inscription no other cleaning method will reveal such detail." - Guidance for the Care, Conservation and Recording of Historic Graveyards, The Heritage Council of Ireland.

Use a basic standard form of printing when filling out inventory sheets.

Use only pencils when recording. Ink runs, leeches, and fades over time and is hard to erase and correct.

Always print information to be recorded. Handwritten script is too difficult to read and styles change over time.

Use metric measurements only. All Canadian and international records involving measurements in the heritage field are now in metric.

Be careful to record everything including from the sides, base and reverse of headstones. Mention any unusual decorations or sculpture, as appropriate. Keep your English simple and use straightforward descriptions.

Record exactly what you see; do not assume anything. Use an underscore for each missing or undecipherable letter, e.g. TH\_\_MAS. Use capital letters for capital letters, lower case for lower case. When nothing else is on the stone other than name and date, note [No other info.] showing that this has not been unintentionally missed. Do not rearrange the order of names as they are presented. Record dates exactly as they appear e.g. 28th June, 2012 or 12/06/2012.