



## Leaning Gravestones/Headstones

When it comes to headstones that appear to be leaning or falling down, the PCC would be expected to carry out an 'audit' of safety in the churchyard to include dangerous or leaning headstones. PCCs have a duty of care for visitors to the churchyard and therefore must ensure the churchyard is, within reason, safe. Usually, the PCC would employ a stone mason to carry out such tasks as anything less could come with inherent difficulties and risks.

It should be noted that, like icebergs, some older headstones are monoliths with much of the stone being not visible below the level of the ground and although they lean over time they are rarely in danger of falling. However if it is determined that work is required to headstones then a faculty is necessary to carry out any repairs, re- setting, laying flat or removing. This is because a headstone will always be the responsibility of the heirs of the deceased. And if, over time, as so often happens, they are no longer traceable or interested then to deal with the ownership issue the PCC must seek the authority of the ecclesiastical court for permission to deal with the headstones. Any such work will require a period of public notice and attempt to engage with the headstone's owners to ensure that those that wish to make their own arrangements for their stones have been given the opportunity to do so.