

Questions people ask about cremation



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INTRODUCTION

Cremation is the most popular method of dealing with dead bodies in the United Kingdom as a whole although not equally in all the Kingdom's constituent parts. It has been championed as the least environmentally damaging, least wasteful of land, and least costly of all methods of dealing with the dead.

The first cremation of a dead body in a purpose built building in the UK occurred in 1882. By 1968 cremation had become more popular than burials. There were then 203 crematoria in the UK. Since 2000 more than 70% of all funerals each year have included a cremation. In 2015 there were 277 crematoria in the country, of which 194 were owned and managed by local authorities and 83 privately. New crematoria are still being built, often incorporating heat exchange technology, which allows the heat generated by cremators to be used for such purposes as warming offices and swimming pools. New crematoria, and many older ones, are also fitted with mercury filtration equipment to enable the UK to meet its international obligation to restrict the emission of mercury into the atmosphere.

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What percentage of people choose cremation?	About 75% of all deaths in the UK are followed by cremation.
Are there any religions that do not approve of cremation?	Orthodox Jews Greek Orthodox Church Muslims
Does it cost more to be cremated than buried?	No. Burial is usually more expensive. In addition to the interment fee there may be other charges for grave maintenance.
What are the costs?	The cremation itself The coffin Funeral Directors fee (if one is engaged) Minister or celebrant fee (if one is engaged) Organist fee (if one is engaged) Medical fees – Currently from two separate doctors. Miscellaneous fees: Flowers, order of service etc.
How is a cremation arranged?	There are a number of arrangements that need to be made following a death. The Executor or nearest surviving relative may wish to contact a funeral director who will undertake some of the tasks on their behalf. The funeral director will make the practical arrangements for the collection and storage of the body and will obtain any medical certificates. The funeral director will also discuss with the family their requirements concerning the service arrangements and help with any statutory forms. It will also be necessary for the Executor or nearest surviving relative to register the death.
Can a cremation be arranged without the services of a funeral director?	Yes. The Executor or nearest surviving relative may arrange the cremation themselves but they will have to meet statutory requirements.
Can I have any kind of service I want?	Yes. You can have a religious or non-religious service, or even no service at all. A service must be carried out within the allocated time slot at the crematorium. (This varies between each crematorium). If you prefer, you can arrange for a service in a church or other venue beforehand.

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Do relatives need to decide at this stage about the disposal of cremated remains?	The law relating to cremation requires that ashes are disposed of in accordance with the written instruction of the applicant (the Executor or nearest surviving relative). There will be a range of options on offer including: Burial/Scatter at crematorium Sanctum or niche at crematorium Collected from crematorium Inter at family grave/cemetery
What typically happens at the crematorium on the day of the funeral?	The mourners will normally gather in the waiting room a few minutes before their appointed time at the crematorium. The funeral director will arrive with the hearse and principal mourners. The crematorium chapel attendant will accept the coffin by checking the name plate to ensure correct identity and the body will be transferred from the hearse to a trolley. When the principal mourners are ready to proceed the coffin will be conveyed into the chapel by the funeral director or by family bearers. The coffin will be placed on the catafalque and the mourners will be directed to their seats by the funeral director and the funeral service will proceed.
Do I have to have the curtains closed after committal of the body?	During the service the body will be committed. Most crematoria will offer the family the choice of closing the curtains or keeping them open. This will be decided when the funeral arrangements are made so that the funeral director, minister or celebrant and crematoria staff are aware.
What happens when I leave the crematorium chapel?	At the end of the service the mourners will exit the chapel and will be directed to the flower bay. There they may inspect any floral tributes that the deceased may have.
What happens to the coffin?	The coffin is withdrawn to the committal room where the nameplate is checked by the crematorium staff to ensure correct identity. An identity card will then accompany the coffin and the resultant remains until their final disposal or removal from the crematorium.
How long after the service does the actual cremation take place?	This will usually take place shortly after the cremation service. A body not cremated the same day as the coffin is received at the crematorium may only be retained at the crematorium with the written consent of the Applicant for cremation or in circumstances deemed necessary by the cremation authority.
Can relatives witness the committal of the coffin to the cremator?	Yes, but with prior arrangements with both the funeral director and crematorium manager.
Is the cremation governed by a code of ethics and working practices?	Cremation Authorities who are members of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities or the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management are required to operate in strict accordance with a Code of Cremation Practice. This Code provides the ethical standard for cremation practice and is often displayed in the public areas of the crematorium building.

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Is the coffin cremated with the body?	Cremation regulations require that the coffin and all its fittings and furnishings be made suitable for cremation and that the coffin is placed into the cremator in exactly the same condition as that in which it was received at the crematorium. It will not be possible for any floral tributes to be included with the coffin for cremation.
Can more than one body be cremated in a cremator at the same time?	The Code insists that each cremation is carried out separately. Exceptions may be made in the case of a mother and baby or twin children providing the next of kin has made a specific request in writing in this regard. (Mother and baby and twin children may share a coffin).
What happens to cremated remains after cremation?	At the end of the cremation process the cremated remains are removed from the cremator in their entirety and transferred to a separate treatment area. Any ferrous and non-ferrous metals are disposed of in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Cremation Practice, which states "Any metal found amongst the cremated remains shall be disposed of in accordance with the directions of the Cremation Authority or Higher Authority". Utmost care is taken to ensure that the cremated remains are kept separate from any other remains and suitably identified. The cremated remains will be kept in a separate container awaiting final disposal.
What procedures are followed to ensure that cremated remains are kept separate?	As already stated a cremator can only physically accept one coffin at a time. Once the cremation process is complete all the remains are removed before the cremator can be used again. The cremated remains are retained awaiting final disposal in a suitably identified container. The identity card referred to previously accompanies the coffin and cremated remains throughout the whole process until final disposal.
Approximately what quantity of remains will there be following a cremation of an adult?	The cremation of an adult will normally result in cremated remains weighing between 2 and 4kg.
Approximately what quantity of remains will there be following a cremation of non-viable baby, stillborn baby or very young deceased baby?	Mothers of non-viable babies and families of stillborn babies and very young deceased babies considering cremation should be advised that comprehensive guidance is available for use within UK crematoria to ensure that the operational practices in place maximise the opportunity to recover ashes at the end of the cremation process. However, as highlighted within the Report of the Infant Cremation Commission as led by Lord Bonomy, it should be made clear that there is a possibility that ashes will not be recovered and families should be reminded of the availability of the option of burial.
Are there any cremated remains from the cremation of body parts?	Body parts presented for cremation normally consist of soft tissue and in the absence of any bone structure will not produce any cremated remains.
What happens to the metal removed from cremated remains?	Each crematorium differs and depending on the practice any remaining metal may be buried on the crematorium grounds and this will be noted in their records. Alternatively the metal can be recycled and the applicant for cremation will be asked for authority for this to be done.

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What is a Garden of Remembrance?	The Garden of Remembrance consists of special areas set aside for the purpose of burial or scattering of cremated remains. This area is usually adjacent to the crematorium building and is in constant use for this purpose. It may not be possible to mark or identify the exact location of individual cremated remains.
What memorial facilities are available at the crematorium?	<p>Each crematorium will have some form of memorialisation. The most popular form of permanent memorial is the Book of Remembrance. The Book is usually displayed in a special memorial chapel/room and entries are available for viewing by the family. Some crematoria will place an entry in their Book automatically whereas others may require an application made by the family. The family can choose which date the entry is made for example the date of death, birthday or wedding anniversary.</p> <p>Some crematoria provide mounted wall/kerb plaques which can be made of stone or metal and these are usually purchased for a limited period. Columbaria or above ground burial chambers can also be purchased on a lease basis and these will be able to hold (usually) two sets of cremated remains.</p> <p>Trees, shrubs and roses may be dedicated at some crematoria also for a limited period. Donations to the crematorium are often accepted for the provision of items to be used at the crematorium or for the embellishment of the grounds or building. It is advisable to check with your crematorium on their range of memorial items, terms of lease and scale of charges.</p>
What happens to the cremated remains if I chose to have them strewn at the crematorium?	The cremated remains will have taken on a granular form and will be strewn over a wide area of ground. Chemical reaction resulting from exposure to the elements will quickly break down the remains so that within a few days little trace of them will be observed.
What happens to the cremated remains if I chose to have them buried at the crematorium?	A small hole is dug and the cremated remains are poured loosely into the ground. The hole is then filled in. The holes may contain more than one set of cremated remains.
Can cremated remains be retained by the family pending final disposal?	The applicant for cremation may collect and retain the cremated remains if required. Some crematoria will keep cremated remains for a limited period and some may make a charge for this service.
Where can I get more information regarding the cremation process?	The matters referred to may be discussed in more detail with the crematorium Manager (or contact us on 01622 688292/3, e-mail: info@cremation.org.uk). He/she will be more than pleased to answer any further questions.

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THE CREMATION SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The Cremation Society of Great Britain is the pioneer of cremation in this country. It was founded by Queen Victoria's surgeon, Sir Henry Thompson on the 13th January 1874. It is not conducted for profit and is a registered charity.

The Society's income is derived from interest and dividends on investments which have been bought with money from donations and bequests. Its headquarters are at Brecon House in Maidstone, Kent.

Since its formation the Cremation Society has worked to promote and establish the practice of cremation among all members of the community. It has aided local authorities in the setting up of new crematoria and it has pressed the government departments concerned for reforms in the law so that this rational and hygienic method of disposal of the dead might be practised with the least possible restriction.

The first crematorium in the United Kingdom was built in Woking, Surrey, by the Cremation Society, where the first official cremation took place on 26th March 1885. The deceased was a Mrs Pickersgill and the cremation took one and a quarter hours.

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