

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK ABOUT CREMATION

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Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities)**

1. Q How many of the deaths which occur in Great Britain each year result in cremation?

A Cremation has become the preferred method of disposal in Great Britain. Approximately 75% of all recorded deaths are now followed by cremation.

2. Q Are there any religious groups which forbid cremation to their members?

A All Christian denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church, allow cremation. Cremation is also acceptable to Sikhs, Hindus, Parsees and Buddhists but it is forbidden by Orthodox Religions, Jews and Muslims.

3. Q Is cremation more expensive than burial?

A Generally the cost of burial is much higher than the fee charged for cremation. In addition to the charges for the interment, a number of other fees for grave purchase, memorials and grave maintenance may be incurred. Cremation usually necessitates the production of medical certificates for which fees are payable to doctors concerned. These certificates are not required when the death has been referred to and investigated by a Coroner (Procurator Fiscal in Scotland)

4. Q What service arrangements are available at the crematorium?

A A full religious ceremony may be conducted at the crematorium within the time allowed for each funeral. Alternatively, a service may take place in any separate place of worship followed by a brief committal ceremony at the crematorium. Families can arrange for their particular Minister to conduct the service or, when required Funeral Directors may secure the services of a suitable Minister on behalf of the family.

5. Q Is it necessary for the cremation to be associated with a religious ceremony?

A The deceased's family can make any ceremony arrangements which they consider to be appropriate. Secular ceremonies can be conducted at the crematorium or, if required, no ceremony need take place. Memorial services can be conducted separately from the cremation ceremony in local places of worship by arrangement with the Minister concerned.

6. Q How is a cremation arranged?

A A number of arrangements need to be made following a death. The responsibility normally falls on the Executor or the nearest surviving relative who may wish to approach a professional Funeral Director who will undertake some of the various tasks on their behalf. The Funeral Director will need to discuss with the family their requirements concerning the service arrangements and will assist in completing the necessary statutory and non-statutory forms.

The Funeral Director will make the practical arrangements for the collection of the body and will obtain the necessary medical certificates. It will be necessary to register the death and information will be provided by the Funeral Director to assist in completing that duty.

7. Q Do relatives need to decide at this stage about the disposal of cremated Remains/ashes?

A The Funeral Director will discuss with relatives the alternative arrangements which may be adopted for the disposal of cremated remains/ashes. It is likely that a form of authority will be required to be signed advising the Cremation Authority of the wishes of the family.

If they are undecided it will be possible for the cremated remains/ashes to be retained, either at the crematorium or at the Funeral Director's premises, pending a decision.

8. Q What are the normal options for disposal of cremated remains/ashes?

A All crematoria provide a Garden of Remembrance where cremated remains/ashes can be dispersed. Some crematoria provide niches where urns or caskets containing cremated remains/ashes may be placed for limited periods. Cremated remains/ashes can be removed from the crematorium in a suitable container for disposal elsewhere. This may include interment in a grave in a cemetery or churchyard, dispersal at another crematorium or dispersal privately in a particular area selected by the family. Suitable permission should be obtained from the appropriate Authority or land owner in these cases.

9. Q What is a Garden of Remembrance and what facilities may be provided there?

A The Gardens of Remembrance consist of special areas, often adjacent to the crematorium, set aside for the disposal of cremated remains/ashes. They are used continually for this purpose and as a result it may not be possible or appropriate to mark or identify the exact location of individual cremated remains/ashes. The Gardens are normally arranged to provide a focal point for visitors and may include a variety of memorial facilities.

10. Q What memorial facilities are available at crematoria?

A All crematoria have some form of memorial facility. The most usual form of permanent memorial is the Book of Remembrance. The Book is usually displayed in a special memorial chapel and entries are available for viewing either automatically on the anniversary of the date of death or on request. Some crematoria provide wall or kerb mounted plaques in stone or metal although these are normally purchased for a limited period only. Roses, trees and shrubs may be dedicated at some crematoria for periods which may be extended by agreement. Donations are often accepted for the provision of items to be used at the crematorium or for the embellishment of the buildings or grounds. The Funeral Director should be aware of the memorial options available but direct enquiries to the Manager of the Crematorium will ensure that full details are provided together with a scale of charges.

11. Q What is the procedure followed at the crematorium on the day of the funeral?

A The mourners will normally gather at the crematorium in the waiting room or close to the entrance of the chapel a few minutes before the appointed time of the funeral service. It is not usual for the ceremony to commence before the publicised time. When the principal mourners are ready to proceed, the coffin will be conveyed

into the chapel by the Funeral Director unless family bearers are used by request. The coffin will be placed on the catafalque and mourners will be directed to their seats after which the service will proceed. At the moment during the service when the committal of the body takes place the coffin may be obscured from view by curtains or withdrawn from the chapel. At the end of the service the mourners leave the chapel and may then inspect the floral tributes.

12 Q What happens to the coffin after the committal?

A The coffin is withdrawn into the committal room where the nameplate is carefully checked by crematorium staff to ensure the correct identity. An identity card will then accompany the coffin and the resultant remains until their final disposal or removal from the crematorium.

13. Q Can relatives witness the committal of the coffin to the cremator?

A The reception of the coffin in the committal room and its introduction into a cremator can be witnessed by arrangement with the Manager of the Crematorium. It is preferable to advise the Funeral Director of these requirements as early as possible when making the funeral arrangements.

14. Q Is the cremation of a body governed by a code of ethics and working practices?

A Cremation Authorities who are members of the Federation of British Cremation Authorities are required to operate strictly in accordance with a Code of Cremation Practice. This Code, which provides the ethical standard for cremation practice as adopted by the majority of crematoria in Great Britain, is often displayed in the public areas of the crematorium building. A copy can be downloaded from the Federation website www.fbca.org.uk

15. Q How soon after the service will the cremation take place?

A The cremation will usually be commenced shortly after the service. A body not cremated on 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, including impacts upon the environment. All bodies retained at the crematorium will be accommodated in secure and sanitary conditions within the building.

16. Q Is the coffin cremated with the body?

A The Code requires that the coffin be placed in the cremator in exactly the same condition as that in which it was received at the crematorium. Crematorium regulations require that the coffin and all its fittings and furnishings be made from materials suitable for cremation. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 has placed a responsibility on Cremation Authorities to ensure that the process is completed under controlled conditions which will minimise the impact on the environment. In these circumstances it will be necessary for any items included in the coffin for presentation or viewing purposes to be removed by the Funeral Director before the coffin is conveyed to the crematorium. It will not be possible for any floral tributes to be included with the coffin for cremation.

17. Q Should items of jewellery be left on a body for cremation?

A It is preferable that all items of jewellery be removed from the body before the coffin is conveyed to the crematorium. The Funeral Director should ascertain your wishes in respect of this matter when the funeral arrangements are being discussed. It will not be possible to recover any items of jewellery after the coffin has been received at the crematorium.

18. Q Can more than one body be cremated in a cremator at the same time?

A The Code insists that each cremation is carried out separately. Exceptions may be made for instance in the case of mother and baby or twin children providing that the next of kin has made a specific request in this regard.

19. Q What happens to the cremated remains/ashes after the cremation?

A At the conclusion of a cremation the cremated remains/ashes are removed from the cremator in their entirety and conveyed to a treatment area in a special container. Ferrous metals used in the construction of the coffin or metal used in medical implants and non-ferrous metals which may include an unrecognisable element of precious material will be disposed of in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Cremation Practice, which states "Any metal found amongst the cremated remains/ashes shall be disposed of in accordance with the directions of the Cremation Authority or Higher Authority". The utmost care is taken to ensure that cremated remains/ashes, following their removal from the cremator, shall be kept separate from any other remains and suitably identified. The cremated remains/ashes will be placed into separate containers awaiting final disposal.

20. Q What procedures are followed to ensure that cremated remains/ashes are kept separate?

A A cremator can physically accept only one coffin at a time and all remains are removed before the cremator can be used again. Following the cremation process, all Cremated Remains/Ashes are retained awaiting final disposal in separate containers which are suitably identified at all times. The identity card referred to previously, accompanies the coffin and cremated remains/ashes throughout the process until final disposal, whether that is by dispersal in the Gardens of Remembrance or collection from the crematorium for final disposal elsewhere. The code of ethics and practical necessity are complementary and combine to ensure that the separation of cremated remains/ashes is achieved.

21. Q How are cremated remains/ashes treated at the crematorium?

A Cremated remains/ashes are removed from the cremator only when no further reduction is possible. The remains are withdrawn into a cooling area where any metals are removed and then placed in a suitable and carefully identified container to await dispersal or collection in accordance with the applicant's instructions.

22. Q What quantity of remains will there be following a cremation?

A The cremation of an adult will normally result in the presentation of cremated remains/ashes weighing between 2 and 4 kg. In the case of non-viable babies, stillborn babies and very young deceased babies it may not be possible to guarantee that any remains will be available for collection following the cremation process.

23. Q What quantity of remains will there be following a cremation of non-viable babies, stillborn babies and very young deceased babies?

A Mothers of non-viable babies and families of stillborn babies and very young deceased babies considering cremation should be advised where there is a possibility that ashes will not be recovered and reminded of the availability of the option of burial.

24. Q Do you get any cremated remains/ashes from the cremation of body parts

A Body parts presented at the crematorium for cremation normally consists of soft tissue and in the absence of any bone structure will not produce any cremated remains/ashes.

25. Q What happens to the metal removed from the cremated remains/ashes?

A Depending on the practice carried out at a crematorium the metals may be interred within the crematorium grounds where records are kept of where the metal is interred or alternatively they can be recycled and the applicant for cremation will be asked to give authority for this to be done.

26. Q What happens to the cremated remains/ashes when they are strewn in the crematorium grounds?

A The cremated remains/ashes, which have assumed a granular form following their reduction, are normally distributed over a wide area of ground. Chemical reactions resulting from exposure to the elements quickly break down the remains so that within a few days little trace of them can be observed. Some crematoria follow the practice of dressing the area where the cremated remains/ashes have been dispersed, with a suitable mixture of loam and sand.

27. Q Can cremated remains/ashes be interred and their position marked with a memorial?

A The Gardens of Remembrance attached to a crematorium may provide for the erection of permanent memorials. Cremated remains/ashes interred in Gardens of Remembrance are not normally contained in a casket or container of any kind. If it is the choice of the Applicant for Cremation to inter cremated remains/ashes in a grave with traditional facilities for memorialisation, then enquiries should be made to the person responsible for the respective cemetery.

28. Q Can cremated remains/ashes be retained by the family pending final disposal?

A The Applicant for cremation may collect and retain the cremated remains/ashes if required. Cremated remains/ashes can be retained at the crematorium awaiting final disposal for a limited period although a charge is often made for this facility.

29. Q What arrangements can be made to ensure that cremation is the selected method of disposal following death?

A Clear instructions in writing should be given to the person who will be responsible for making the funeral arrangements. Such instructions are not binding in law and it will therefore be necessary to ensure that the person instructed is someone who is likely to carry out the wishes of the deceased. The final decision will rest on the executors.

30. Q Can more information be obtained concerning cremation and if required can a crematorium be visited by members of the public?

A The matters referred to previously may be discussed in more detail with the Manager of the local crematorium. The Crematorium Manager will be pleased to answer further questions and make arrangements for any member of the public to be accompanied on a visit to the crematorium.

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**For further information specific to Roucan Loch Crematorium please contact:
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